THE THEATRICAL AND DRAMATIC FORM OF THE SWORDFIGHT IN THE

CHRONICLE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

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## PART ONE. AN OVERVIEW OF SWORDFIGHTING ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study of the swordfighting sequences in Shakespeare's chronicle plays has three interrelated purposes: (1) to reconstruct, as accurately as possible, the enactment of the swordfights as the Elizabethans would have seen them, (2) to examine the manner in which Shakespeare uses this form of stage combat to illuminate plot, character, and theme in the relevant plays, and (3) to offer some opinions as to how these swordfights can best be presented on the contemporary stage in the light of (1) and (2).

Essentially, then, my dissertation is a study of Elizabethan stage business, and it is written with the view that the stage business, however ephemeral, is as integral a part of Shakespeare's plays as are the printed texts.

The work is divided into two parts: Part One is intended to give a general overview of swordfighting in Elizabethan drama, including a discussion of the style of such swordfights, and an investigation of the manner in which Elizabethan dramatists before Shakespeare included or failed to include displays of swordfighting in their plays. Distinctions are drawn between the various types of swordfight: battle scenes, the brawl or sudden fight, trial by battle, the duel, and combat sport. Other matters undertaken in Part One are an attempt to learn what armor and weaponry the actors would have used in Shakespeare's chronicle plays when engaged in stage combat, and
finally, given that the visual aspect of a Shakespearean play is essentially a part of the visual imagery of the Elizabethan age, other facets of this imagery, which, it will be argued, was essentially "neo-medievalist," are discussed in an endeavor to find some thematic connection between it and the swordfighting sequences of Shakespeare's chronicle plays.

Part Two is an examination of the plays themselves: the eight plays of the Lancastrian history cycle, King John, Troilus and Cressida, King Lear, and Macbeth—the reasons for including these as chronicle plays while excluding others are given in the course of the study.
ERRATA

p. 16, 1. 1: "Like Will to Like" for "Like Will to Live"
p. 32, 1. 10: "such as normally" for "as normally"
p. 35, 1. 9: "spoken by" for "given to"
p. 39, 1. 21: "in" for "is"
p. 66, 1. 7: "somehow to show" for "somehow show"
p. 71, 1. 2: "fighting, and were" for "fighting, were"
p. 73, 1. 6: "manoeuvre" for "manoeuvre"
p. 74: 1. 19: insert commas after the words "so" and "Orleans"
p. 77, 1. 24: "and the armorer's" for "with the armorer's"
p. 94, 1. 10: "controversy . . ." for "controversy."
p. 136, 1. 3: "Angers" for "Angiers"
p. 144, 1. 22: "temporary capture of" for "temporary of"
p. 149, 1. 8: "shown" for "explicated"
p. 260, 1. 7: "Bamborough" for "Bramborough"
p. 262, 1. 6: 'Greeks was" for 'Greeks were"
I hereby affirm that this dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for an award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

I consent to this dissertation being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Charles Edelman
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It would be impossible to overestimate the value of the contribution of my supervisor, Dr. Alan Brissenden, to this study. I am also deeply indebted to his colleague, Mr. K.B. Magarey, for so admirably filling in during the time Dr. Brissenden was overseas, and to Mr. F.H. Mares, for his advice and encouragement.

I have also benefited from the expert advice of Ms. Robin Eaden, Mrs. Rosemary Luke, and Dr. Wilfrid Prest.

Most of my research has been conducted at the Barr Smith Library of the University of Adelaide, and I must give particular thanks to reference librarian Ms. Elizabeth Lee and to the highly professional staff at the Inter-Library Loans desk, while the courteous and patient assistance I received at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the New York Public Library did credit to these famous institutions.
AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE


Abbreviations for Shakespearean and Chaucerian titles are those recommended in the MLA Handbook, and I have used the abbreviated title of journals for which such abbreviations are commonly accepted.

Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations from Shakespeare are as given in G. Blakemore Evans, ed., The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) following Evans’ act, scene, and line references, and his modern American spelling.

In a study such as this one, spelling is a difficult, and at times vexing, problem. Both primary and secondary quotations are in the original spelling, with the exception of substituting the modern "u" and "j" for the older "v" and "i" where appropriate. My own text is in American spelling.

I have reached the great majority of my conclusions by the
traditional method of examining the texts of the plays and the critical and historical literature, as well as by viewing the magnificent collections of arms and armor at the Royal Armouries, H.M. Tower of London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Some conclusions, however, are the result of personal experimentation: I was director of stage combat at the Utah Shakespearean Festival in 1966 and 1967, and held the same post at the Ashland, Oregon, Festival in 1968 and 1969. I have also acted several Shakespearean roles for which some swordfighting is required. Deciding what would have occurred in Elizabethan times by looking at what appears to work best in the modern theatre is a practice fraught with difficulties, even when working in a playhouse which is designed, as the Ashland stage is, with a view to simulating Elizabethan performance conditions. In the absence of other textual or historical evidence, however, and with this caveat in mind, I will occasionally look to the modern theatre for indications of Elizabethan staging—although some conventions have changed since Shakespeare's day, e.g. the use of female actors and controlled lighting, the most important dramatic conventions are, of course, common to all periods and genres of drama.
PART ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF SWORDFIGHTING ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE
CHAPTER I

THE STYLE OF ELIZABETHAN THEATRICAL SWORDFIGHTING

The Playhouse's Association with Combat Sport

This study will begin with an attempt to establish the dominant style of presentation of Shakespearean swordfights in the Elizabethan period. One is faced, whenever investigating the original stage business of Shakespeare's plays, with the necessity of reconstructing a theatrical entity without documentary evidence; stage business is always ephemeral, but at least in more recent eras, as the valuable work of Arthur Colby Sprague has shown, there are prompt-books and reviews to consult. Within the very few eyewitness accounts of Shakespeare's plays in Elizabethan times, however, there is not a single descriptive reference to any of the many swordfights therein.

Generally, scholars point to the well-known comment in Sidney's Defence of Poesie (c. 1583) as being the earliest published critical opinion of swordfighting on the Elizabethan stage:

1Although the age of Shakespeare covers both late Elizabethan and early Jacobean times, the word "Elizabethan" will be used throughout this study, unless otherwise indicated, to cover not only the reign of Elizabeth, but the years of James's reign during which Shakespeare was active.

... while in the meantime two Armies fly in, represented with four swords & bucklers, and then what hard hart will not receive it for a pitched field?  

At first glance, it might appear that Sidney is decrying the lack of good, realistic stage swordfighting, hence giving the impression that the theatrical fights of Elizabethan times were unconvincing. It is important to realize, however, that Sidney is not referring to the staging of swordfights *per se*, but to the overall theatrical representation of a pitched battle, a different, albeit related topic.

While Sidney objects to the depiction of a battle with only a few soldiers, he says nothing about how convincingly the four soldiers, with their "four swords and bucklers," actually fought.

Jean MacIntyre, in a discussion of Elizabethan stage battles, puts Sidney's comments in perspective:

Sidney, to be sure, may have had in mind shows by the small professional troupes of the 1570's, performing *Horestes* with six actors or *Cambyses* with eight. Even if one accepts Richard Southern's conjecture that itinerant actors recruited a group of "local men at arms" to march behind each side's one soldier with a speaking part, recruits might not be available, and Sidney's eyewitness evidence suggests that the conjecture is more like wishful thinking . . . [He] could have seen performances at the Theatre . . . more probably, however, he is thinking of performances in a hall, an inn, or a booth, with a cleared area of platform some ten by twelve feet, which would hardly accommodate even six men safely in rigorous combat.  

The initial point to be made is that as far as battles and the swordfighting that took place in them are concerned, Sidney, who died in 1586 and saw no Shakespearean combat, was criticizing a convention

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4 It will be argued that if extras were used for the stage battle in *Horestes*, they were most likely to have been children.

belonging to a different theatrical tradition, in which there may not have been an attempt at verisimilitude in the fighting. More importantly, he has absolutely nothing to say about how individual combats, be they between supernumeraries playing footsoldiers or professional actors playing principal characters, were fought.

A famous comment which does relate to Shakespearean combat scenes is found in Jonson's prologue to Every Man in His Humor:

... with three rusty swords,
And help of some few foot-and-half-foot words.
Fight over York, and Lancastor's long jars.
And in the tyring house bring wounds to scars.6

This passage does not appear until the Folio version of 1616, giving it more of the status of of a satiric gibe at a tetralogy by then about twenty-six years old, rather than a complaint about contemporary theatrical practice. Furthermore, like Sidney, Jonson is referring to the practice of "dividing one man into a thousand parts," not to how that one man used his weapons.

Schlegel, writing around 1800, was one of the first to address himself specifically to the swordplay within Elizabethan stage combat. After first reminding us that the Greeks wanted no part of onstage fighting, he says

It is certainly laughable enough that a handful of awkward warriors in mock armour, by means of two or three swords, with which we clearly see they take especial care not to do the slightest injury to one another, should decide the fate of mighty kingdoms. But the opposite extreme is still much worse. If we in reality succeed in exhibiting the tumult of a great battle, the storming of a fort, and the like, in a manner calculated in any way to deceive the eye, the power of these sensible impressions is so great that they render the spectator incapable of bestowing that attention which a poetical work of art demands, and thus the essential is sacrificed to the accessory.

Nevertheless, he finds himself forced to admire, at least in theory,

some stage combat:

With all the disadvantages that I have mentioned, Shakespeare and several Spanish poets have contrived to derive such great beauties from the immediate representation of war, that I cannot bring myself to wish they had abstained from it. A theatrical manager of the present day will have a middle course to follow; his art must, in an especial manner, be directed to make what he shows us appear only as separate groups of an immense picture, which cannot be taken in at once by the eye, he must convince the spectators that the main action takes place behind the stage; and for this purpose he has easy means at his command in the nearer or more remote sound of warlike music and the din of arms.7

It is evident that Schlegel is discussing Shakespearean production in his own day, and not Shakespeare's, but his comments do strike at the fundamental nature of the problem—in saying that one should, in effect, make it real, but not too real, Schlegel raises the whole subject of what the basic conventions of theatre are, whether or not they change from age to age, and how these conventions might have been applied by Shakespeare's company in scenes of violent physical action.

He comments that we, the audience, are likely to find the battles in Shakespeare "laughable," since we see only "a handful of awkward warriors in mock armor, by means of two or three swords, with which we clearly see they take especial care not to do the slightest injury to one another." But what of that? Does not the audience "know" that everything it sees on the stage is not "true," but is it not willing, in Coleridge's phrase, to suspend its disbelief? Assuredly, swordfights do look bad when we see that the actors are taking care not to hurt one another—just as bad as a love scene when we "see" that the leading lady does not find the thought of kissing her co-star an attractive proposition. But, as good actors can convince us that the characters they play are in love, a good Richard III and Richmond should also be able to convince us that they are out to kill one

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another, with Richmond succeeding in an exciting fashion. The problem is actually one of relative difficulty: for us, as for the audience of Schlegel's time, the demands which stage combat makes of the actor, with its associated problems of costuming (Schlegel's point about mock armor is a salient one) and wounds, contrive to render it one of the more difficult theatrical effects, particularly for the modern actor who is not necessarily adept at fencing, but difficult, as has been shown by some exciting stage combat in today's Shakespearean theatres, does not mean impossible.

Given that Elizabethan actors, who wore swords in everyday life, would have been competent, or even, as Tarlton was, expert in the art of fencing, it is unlikely that they would consider the Richard-Richmond fight or any other stage swordfight as being necessarily forbidding, although anyone who has played a fencing role knows it is both very strenuous and, given the ever-present chance of an accident, mentally exhausting.

Schlegel then concedes, without saying he has ever seen it happen, that it is possible to present a stage fight realistically, but suspects that it would detract from the poetic content of the play. Schlegel's comment leads to the proposal of a major tenet of this study, for it shows a basic misconception about what dramatic production, particularly Shakespearean dramatic production, is. A Shakespeare play is assuredly "a poetical work of art," but the poetry is to be found in the totality of all of its parts, including its (sometimes violent) stage business. Those who want only the "poetry,"

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as I understand Schlegel to use the term, are better advised to stay home and read the sonnets.

It is not surprising that Schlegel felt as he did, considering the dominant style of Shakespearean production in his time. A realistic swordfight would (and does) look out of place in a declamatory production behind a proscenium arch, probably as preposterous as the fight at the beginning of Don Giovanni usually appears. Not only Schlegel, but later critics bemoan the fact that a good swordfight is something rarely seen in their day. Writing in the 1920s of Burbage's bouts in a number of roles, T.W. Baldwin imagines they "were not the creaky-kneed performances of the modern stage, but fencing exhibitions." Dover Wilson, in his introduction to George Silver's Paradoxes of Defence, also yearns for the spectacular fight: "to the modern spectator the fencing-match in Hamlet seems tame as the ghost scenes slightly ridiculous."9 It is important to note the implicit assumption in Wilson's view which is explicit in Baldwin: that the fights were scenes of exciting action in Elizabethan times. It is necessary, then, to ascertain, as much as possible, whether this assumption is warranted.

Baldwin helpfully points us towards T.F. Ordish's history of the London theatres for support of his view. Ordish makes the very cogent point that the Theatre, the Globe, and the other playhouses were all used for fencing prizes and were constructed with this function in mind, this association between the "play" of drama and the "play" of sporting combat having its origins deep in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of community displays of martial prowess:

The existence of the playhouse implied a more highly organized celebration of the national plays or games; and the Elizabethan drama grew up amid the ancient and traditional sports and pastimes of the people in an age quick with new ideas and new life. To understand these conditions is to understand why acting-plays written for the old playhouses were so full of action, energy, and varied movement; why military pomp and circumstance so frequently entered into the traffic of the stage; why broadsword, buckler, lance and shield, javelin, rapier, and harquebus were brought into the dramatist's story . . . the fight between Macbeth and Macduff must have been a magnificent spectacle. It requires some study on our part to realize what such a climax to a sublime play meant to Englishmen in an Elizabethan playhouse.\(^{10}\)

In his comprehensive study of the development of the Elizabethan playhouse, Glynne Wickham cites ample evidence to support his contention that its association with fencing was particularly strong. He notes that "feats of activity" were "frequently coupled with Elizabethan stage plays," and that "of all 'feats of activity' . . . gymnastic, balletic, and pugilistic, none was more popular than fencing."\(^{11}\) Of great importance for our purposes are the three documents from the Chamber Accounts which show that from 1588 to 1590 both the Admiral's Men and Lord Strange's Men performed feats of activity as part of their regular operations;\(^{12}\) although the performances alluded to in the documents were at court, it is most unlikely that both companies would have limited feats of activity to that venue and excluded them from the playhouse.

Wickham's aim is to show that the design of the Elizabethan playhouse owed as much to the pre-existing arenas for trial by combat and combat sport as it did to the innyard. Regarding trial by combat, he cites a "remarkable building" built in Tuthill Fields for a trial


\(^{12}\)Wickham, 2.2:164, 2.2:42-44.
involving one Thomas Paramour, noting that it "provides a magnificent prototype for the Fortune Theatre if not the circular Swan."\textsuperscript{13}

In discussion of the circular ground plans for the Cornish Miracle Cycle and The Castle of Perseverance, Wickham agrees with Ordish that there must have been some connection between these "round" theatres, tournament arenas, and the round theatres used for plays and fencing in Elizabethan times. He terms the first Elizabethan theatres—the Theatre, the Curtain, the Globe—

playhouses in the literal and traditional sense of that word—houses for plays; i.e. for recreation, for 'feats of activity,' for entertainment including stage plays. In building his theatre in Finsbury Fields therefore Burbage was in one sense at least no innovator: for he was simply copying what he had done several times already in respect of recreational activities in Tuthill Fields and in Southwark.\textsuperscript{14}

He later notes

... in Elizabethan London the multipurpose gamehouse proved to be the most useful, profitable, and most sought-after locality for presenting stage plays because it admitted the largest number of spectators and allowed a stage, tiring house, and scenic emblems to be erected and dismantled with that degree of ease which was obligatory for companies of entertainers whose economy was nomadic and not residential.\textsuperscript{15}

The views of Ordish and Wickham on the relationship of fencing to the playhouses of Elizabethan times having been described in a general sense, the documentary evidence may be examined. Much of it is cited by Wickham, but material from other sources has been added, and as far as is convenient, it is set out in chronological order. (In all cases

\textsuperscript{13}Wickham, 2.1:163-64, 165-72. The Paramour case is discussed below (325-27) in connection with the trial by battle in King Lear. See also John Stow, The Annales of England: Faithfully collected out of the most authenticall Authors, Records, and other Monuments of Antiquitie, lately corrected, encreased, and continued, from the first inhabitation until the present yeere 1601 (London: 1601), 1132-33.

\textsuperscript{14}Wickham, 2.1:164, 168.

\textsuperscript{15}Wickham, 2.2:4
possible, reprints or microfilm reproductions of the original documents have been seen for verification and, at times, amplification.)

The Register of the Masters of Defence (c. 1565-1590) shows, as is noted by O.L. Brownstein, that from 1570-1590 "fencers had turned almost exclusively to the theatres" as a venue for their prizes.16

In 1572, a Document of Control included fencers and players in a list of persons who, if unlicensed, would be "deemed Roges Vacaboundes and Sturdy Beggers."17

Chambers notes that from 5 June 1575 to 3 July 1590, the Register of the Masters of Defence lists fourteen notices of prizes to be fought at the Bull Inn, which was also used for plays.18 Similarly, from 1575 to 1589 the Bel Savage Inn hosted both plays and prizes,19 and there are prizes recorded at the Curtain from 1579 to 1583, and after 1622.20

A 1578 letter from the Recorder of London to the Lord Treasurer refers to "plaies, unlawful games, ffensse skoles" as activities to be suppressed.21

In his well known tract The School of Abuse (1579), Gosson


17Chambers, 4:270.


19Chambers, 2:382, citing Sloane MS. 2530 ff. 7,10,11,14. George Silver and his brother Toby challenged two Italian masters to a prize "to be played at the Bell Savage." The nominated weapons were "single Rapier, Rapier and Dagger, the single Dagger, the single Sword, the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, & two hand Sword, the Staffe, battell [sic] Axe, and Morris Pike," Silver, 66.

20Chambers, 2:402, citing Sloane MS. 2530, ff. 4,12,43,44,46.

virulently attacks fencers in language as strong, and at nearly as great length, as he does players.22

Wickham notes that the Lord Mayor of London's Shows had regular displays of fencing, and the Books of the Livery Companies of London reveal that payments to Masters of Defence for such displays start in 1581 and go through to the end of these records in 1639.23

"Playes" and "pryces" are forbidden in a Document of Control of 1581.24

In July, 1582, a request was made, only to be refused, for permission for one John David to play a prize at the Bull. A similar refusal was made for a prize at the Theatre on 27 April, 1583. The letter of refusal from the Lord Mayor refers to "the assemblie of people to playes, beare bayeting, fencers, and prophane spectacles and the Theatre and Curtaine and other like places." On 12 November, 1584, Valentine Longe was licensed to play a prize at the same playhouse.25

In 1587, a year before his death, the actor Tarlton was made a Master of Fence.26

As noted above, documents from the Chamber Accounts show that (by the old calendar) in February of 1588 and March of 1589 the Admiral's Men performed "feats of activity," as did Lord Strange's Men, in March of 1590.


24Chambers, 4:283.


26Chambers, 2:343.
Sometime before 1596, William Lambarde wrote of the "Beare-baiting, Enterludes, or Fence-play" at the Paris Garden, the Theatre, and the Bell Savage, and in the 1598 edition of Survey of London, Stow refers to the Theatre and the Curtain as "two houses for the shewe of Activities, comedies, tragedies, and histories for recreation."27

There is a record of Henslowe letting the Rose to fencers in 1598: "James Cranwigge the 4 of November 1598 playd his callenge [sic] in my howsse & I sholde haue hade for my parte XXXxs which the company hath receuyd & oweth yt to me." Also in 1598, a Document of Control renewed the statute against "all Fencers Bearewards (and) common Players of Enterludes."28

There is a record of payment in 1603 to fencers "to play and to shewe skill in severall weapons for the delight and pleasure of the Kinge of Denmark at the Courte of Greenewich."29

The notorious Turner-Dun incident, in which the professional fencer Dun was killed, occurred at the Swan on February 7, 1602.30

In 1604, the ordinance was again renewed against "all Fencers Bearewards (and) common Players of Enterludes." Fencers entertained at Court on 6 August, 1605.31

The lease for the Fortune of 1608 states the usage of the theatre


28Chambers, 1:361, citing Henslowe 1:98; Chambers, 4:324.

29Malone Society, Collections, 6:44.


31Chambers, 4:337, 4:121.
as "stage playing or other exercise." 32

Wickham has a most interesting idea about the contract of 1613 for the Hope. Offering conclusive evidence, he corrects a misreading by Greg, who thought the word "Game" was "same;" the contract actually reads "one other Game place or Plaiehouse fitt and convenient in all things, both for players to playe In, And for the game of Beares and Bulls to be bayte in the same." 33 Fencing was indeed amongst the activities of the "game" place, for in a document of 1632 the Hope is described as a building for players, wild beasts, and "gladiators." 34

In a 1620 document, fencing was one of the uses planned for a proposed London Amphitheatre, and Malone notes that "after the year 1620, as appears from Sir Henry Herbert's office-book, they (the Rose and the Swan) were used occasionally for the exhibition of prize fighters." 35

There was an accidental stabbing at the Red Bull in 1622, when a sword in the hand of actor Richard Baxter "injured a feltmaker's apprentice named Gill on the stage." G.E. Bentley notes that the Red Bull had a particularly poor reputation—"violence and vulgarity seem to be the usual associations with the Red Bull." 36

Bentley notes that there are very few documents recording non-dramatic activity at the Globe, 37 but this does not necessarily lessen the association with fencing the structure would have had for the

32 Wickham, 2:1:309.
34 Chambers, 2:470.
35 Bentley, 6:294; cited Bentley, 6:250.
36 Bentley, 2:361, 6:238.
37 Bentley, 6:195.
audience. This association was architectural, and, as Wickham observes, the Globe was reconstructed from the frame of the dismantled Theatre. While there may have been differing interior details, the basic design would have had to remain the same, as "the frame, like any skeleton, controls shape." 38

Some other major scholars of the Elizabethan age are in agreement that fencing was an integral part of the world of the theatre. M.C. Bradbrook writes, "the theatre was not restricted to acting nor was acting confined to the theatre. Tumblers, performing animals, swords-men took the boards." 39

In Shakespeare of London, Marchette Chute provides this descriptive passage:

Nearly all plays involved some kind of fighting, and in staging hand-to-hand combats the actor's training had to be excellent. The average Londoner was an expert on the subject of fencing, and he did not pay his penny to see two professional actors make ineffectual dabs at each other when the script claimed they were fighting to the death... The actor had to achieve the brutal reality of an Elizabethan duel without injuring himself or his opponent, a problem that required a high degree of training and of physical coordination. The theatres and the inn-yards were frequently rented by the fencing societies to put on exhibition matches. 40

Perhaps today's spectator can best picture the association of the Shakespearean theatre with skillful fencing by imagining a modern Hamlet performed in a boxing arena, and then having a pugilistic, instead a fencing prize-fight, end the play. Furthermore, the imagined crowd would be composed largely of the smoking, beer-drinking denizens

38Wickham, 2.2:31.


40Marchette Chute, Shakespeare of London (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949), 87. It will be seen that Chute's comment regarding "nearly all plays" is an overestimation, but the tenor of her comments is, I believe, correct.
of this colorful, Runyonesque world.41 Then let us have a Hamlet and a
Laertes who cannot fight convincingly at all, either due to physique or
simple lack of skill, and imagine the crowd's reaction. Given that the
Hamlet audience at the Globe was exactly this sort of crowd, sitting or
standing in what was not only a theatre, but a prize-fight arena, one
is led to draw the conclusion that anything less than a totally veri-
similar fight would have been laughed off the stage, or worse. To
return to Schlegel's original objection that the crowd "knows" the
actors are trying hard not to hurt one another, the only answer, as
indicated previously, is to point to the basic nature of the theatrical
event, and to say that an audience, by definition, always accepts a
good deal of artifice, with the amount dependent on the style of the
play and the common dramatic conventions of the time; the circumstances
of Shakespearean production in the Elizabethan age were such that the
audience would have wished to see only the most convincing of fights.

A view which in some respects may be described as "alternative" is
presented by Alan C. Dessen.42 He argues that some swordfights and
other violent action on the Elizabethan stage did call, even in Shake-
speare's time, for another "logic," i.e. set of conventions, apart from
the basic one of theatrical verisimilitude. While Dessen's discussion
is presented in a most stimulating and scholarly fashion, it suffers to
a degree from a not-always-clear delineation as to what he feels was

41That smoking and beer-drinking at the playhouses was common is
well documented. In particular, see Chambers, 2:365, citing a con-
temporary account by Thomas Platter, and 2:549, where there are several
citations. One amusing piece of evidence is afforded by the fact that
when the Globe burnt down, a man whose trousers caught fire managed to
have the flames extinguished by a bystander's prudent use of a bottle
of beer. C. Walter Hodges, Shakespeare's Theatre (New York: Coward,
McCann & Geoghegan, 1964), 101.

42Alan C. Dessen, Elizabethan Stage Conventions and their Modern
the case in Shakespeare's time, and what should be the case in our own.43 His choice of an example to demonstrate that some violent stage business was necessarily symbolic rather than verisimilar is an odd one: "enter Nessus with an arrow through him," from Thomas Heywood's The Brazen Age (c. 1613).44 As any vaudevillian knows, to rig an arrow, making it appear as if it has pierced the actor, and to have the actor stagger on stage, is the simplest of theatrical tricks, and, contrary to Dessen's implication, is not always comic: in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1977 production of 3 Henry VI, director Terry Hands decided to follow the reported text's stage direction, having Clifford enter in exactly this way. To the company's surprise it was anything but funny.45

That point aside, Dessen argues persuasively, and I think correctly, that an alternative style of stage swordplay was "widely available in the English dramatic tradition." He refers to the elaborate mock-battles of royal entertainments, morality plays such as George Wapull's The Tide Tarrieth No Man (1576), where Vice takes on a variety of opponents with his wooden dagger, and to similar combats found in plays which are contemporary with Wapull's, such as William Wager's Enough is as Good as a Feast (c. 1564) and Ulphian Fulwell's


44 Dessen, 16-17, 105.

Like Will to Live (c. 1568). These allegorical dramas clearly call for a symbolic representation of swordfighting where swordfighting is included in the action.

Dessen then goes on to apply some of these ideas to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, stating his premise concisely:

Can we be confident that a blow in a non-allegorical Elizabethan play would be delivered with the speed, force, and timing of a similar blow in the street outside the theatre? Need a moment of stage violence in the Globe exist as an end in itself, adhering to a logic derived from an equivalent moment in 'real life,' or could it be linked to a symbolic and patterned logic relevant to the world of the play?47

As did Schlegel's concerns about fight scenes, Dessen's questions (he admirably refrains from claiming to have any definite answers) raise a fundamental dramaturgical question, for is it only the more difficult requirements of staging which call on a "symbolic, patterned, logic?" The very nature of presentation, even in the most realistic modern play, will always call for some symbolic logic, i.e., to use Dessen's phrase, doing things "differently than one would on the street." The proscenium-arch box set with all furniture facing front is but one of the numerous examples which could be offered.

One play which probably is contemporary with early Shakespeare and which indeed does, as Dessen observes, call on an "alternative logic" is the historical drama Edmond Ironside, where the author uses a dumb show "to bring complex events on stage."48 Like so many Elizabethan


47Dessen, 110-11.

48Dessen, 13.
plays, it cannot be dated with any certainty; Irving Ribner suggests 1590, while Eric Sams argues for 1588. In Edmond, which is, as is noted by Ribner, a "confused and uncertain" piece stylistically very different from Shakespeare, the hero meets Canutus (King Canute) in single combat on the battlefield three times (11. 962, 976, and 985) and the entire battle sequence is narrated by the Chorus, who tells us

I faine would have you understand the truth
And see the battailes Acted on the stage
But that there length wilbe tedious
Then in dumb shewes I will expolaine at large
Thereire flightes thereire fightes and Edmonds victory.

(11. 969-73)

As the Chorus proceeds with his florid explanation, Edmond and Canutus mime the fight. Such "neo-Senecan dumbshows," as Ribner calls them, could hardly be assumed to be verisimilar in presentation.

While Dessen is correct, then, in asserting that an alternative style of symbolic swordplay was a part of English dramatic tradition, he fails to observe that contemporaneously with the allegorical drama, a rich genre of drama calling for verisimilar stage combat also existed. In the heroical romances Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes (c. 1570), and Common Conditions (c. 1576), the hero engages in some exciting onstage combat, and there is nothing to indicate that the fighting would be "allegorical" in either of them. Indeed, it is likely that Shakespeare was influenced by these or similar "heroical romances" in


50 Ribner, 243.

51 Ribner, 243.

52 The specific nature of the combats in these plays is discussed below, 54-55.
including such an extraordinary amount of swordfighting in his "heroical history," as David Riggs calls it, *Henry VI*.\(^{53}\)

Another play requiring consideration is Richard Edwards' *Palaemon and Arcyte* (1566), performed before a royal audience in the Great Hall at Oxford. There is no extant text of the play, but the description by the contemporary witness John Bereblock, written in Latin, recounts the exciting formal combat between the two title roles, which all at Oxford who had read Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* or its source, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, would have keenly anticipated:

... the blast and blare of trumpets is heard. Then in hand to hand combat they fight fiercely. When at the very first the weapons resounded and the shiny blades gleamed, a great shudder seized the spectators. For a time success fell to neither contestant, and, wearied with fighting, they twice stop to rest; at the third onset, when not only the movements of their bodies and the parrying of their swords, but even their wounds and blood are visible to everybody, Palaemon sinks to the ground and lies prostrate before his victorious cousin.\(^{54}\)

Although, as Durand notes, part of this account is taken from Livy verbatim, (1.25), this in itself is not sufficient cause to doubt, as does Dessen, its basic veracity.\(^{55}\)

Finally, the only *Shakespearean* examples of swordplay Dessen cites in his discussion of "stage violence" which "run counter to the verisimilar assumptions of most critics, editors, and directors," are those featuring Joan in *1 Henry VI*, where the supernatural is


\(^{54}\)W.Y Durand, "*Palaemon and Arcyte, Progne, Marcus Geminus* and the Theatre in Which They Were Acted, as Described by John Bereblock (1566)," *PMLA* 20 (1905): 511.

involved. He also mentions fights in King Lear and Cymbeline where it may be assumed that a staff or cudgel goes up against a sword, although it is not clear whether or not he feels that victory of the more primitive weapon is indicative of a symbolic mode of staging. If there is such an assumption, it is unwarranted; the Elizabethan fencing master George Silver gives clear advice as to how a staff can defeat a sword, and in discussion of the Edgar-Oswald combat to be undertaken below, it will be shown that having this wooden weapon defeat an Italian rapier does not present any particular problems in direction, but, conversely, can be used to portray some effective stage combat.

Dessen goes on to make many useful points about the thematic significance of some of Shakespeare's swordfights, and poses some ideas which the modern fight arranger should consider; where his comments relate to the chronicle plays of Shakespeare they will be given consideration as appropriate. As far as the "original verisimilitude" of the swordfights in Shakespeare is concerned, however, he does not cite a single example to dissuade one from the view that they were presented with anything other than the most convincing sort of realism.

56Dessen, Elizabethan Stage Conventions, 114. His two examples from Heywood do little to advance his argument. The fight in If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody is part of a dumb show which also involves the supernatural. In A Woman Killed With Kindness, he objects to having a "supernumerary maid" realistically stay the hand of Frankford, but unlike Dessen I cannot see where this presents a problem for the "verisimilar" devotee, although Dessen may be right in saying that the moment could be improved if done in a symbolic way. Dessen also mentions, in passing, the Nurse's intervention in Romeo's attempted suicide, but I, like Alan Brissenden, do not see any real difficulty in staging the "staying" of a male hand by a female. Thomas Heywood, If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, ed. Madeleine Doran, 2 vols. (London: Malone Society Reprints, 1934); Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness, 1607 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, Early English Books 1475-1640, reel 891); Alan Brissenden, "Romeo and Juliet, III.iii.108: The Nurse and the Dagger," Notes and Queries, n.s. 28 (1981): 126-27.

57Silver, 38-44. See below, 356.
The Swordfight in Relation to Casting and Rehearsal of Shakespeare's Plays

If it is accepted that Shakespearean swordfights of Elizabethan times were the exciting combats imagined by Baldwin and Dover Wilson, two difficult but most interesting questions arise: (1) how were the fights rehearsed? and (2) which actors played the important fencing roles?

Rehearsal practice in the Elizabethan theatre is a subject about which virtually nothing is known with any certainty. There is no contemporary document to advise us, and even Henslowe's diary is a disappointment in this regard. Ivor Brown, however, makes some plausible deductions: he estimates an output of fifteen new plays a year for Shakespeare's company, which gives slightly above three weeks for each play,

... but that assumes incessant work with no breaks for bad weather in winter or a holiday pause. During the six weeks of Lent performance was in theory forbidden ... players could use the time ... for preparation. So we may surmise the maximum rehearsal time could have been three weeks. But frequently for various reasons it might have been less; and these were not whole day rehearsals but carried on in the mornings and sometimes evenings with the new parts to be studied at the same time. There were enormous new roles to be memorized while the leading men were playing equally long ones in the afternoons.58

If Brown is correct, one is left with the perception, after estimating the number of new plays Shakespeare's company would have presented in one season, along with revivals which would have needed at least a short "brush-up" rehearsal, that by today's standards, Shakespeare's plays received remarkably little rehearsal.

However, for the spectacular swordfights which, I have argued, an Elizabethan audience would have demanded, even Elizabethan actors,

who would have been, one assumes, already highly competent fencers, would have required careful rehearsing, in the very least to avoid either a serious injury, or, as is so often seen today, an obviously tame fight because the under-rehearsed actors are afraid of such an injury. One "shortcut" to an effective swordfight was possible, though, and according to what evidence there is, might even be considered probable. If the same actors had faced each other in previous plays, then much of the preliminary choreographic work and repetitive practice could have been avoided. This brings us, then, to the studies of T.W. Baldwin, and his attempt to ascertain which actors played which roles in the original productions of Shakespeare's plays.

To summarize Baldwin briefly, although this carries the risk of doing him a grave injustice: his always-fascinating study assigns roles to members of Shakespeare's company by the following means: (1) a (very) few contemporary references and cast lists which give us definite assignments, (2) physical descriptions of the characters in the dialogue, which might have been, in turn, descriptions of the actors who portrayed them, (3) Baldwin's "line," i.e. type-casting—that Burbage played these roles, in Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean plays, is known; therefore he would have also played these others, similar in type, and (4) the comparative size of parts—Baldwin assumes that Burbage always played the largest, or nearly the largest, part, while other actors tended to remain "second lead" or "bit" players.

It is easy to see why S.L. Bethell says that this involves "much daring and dubious speculation," since such casting "is the Hollywood variety; the actor is himself, his own personality is fitted into the

It is likely, however, that the actors were far more versatile than that, and could portray a variety of types with great skill, as members of a modern Shakespearean company, if they wish to stay members, must be prepared to do. Richard David is also cautious about Baldwin, particularly in that Baldwin's dating of the earlier plays is often questionable, but does go on to say that "nevertheless, the possible ricketiness of some parts of the superstructure should not make us doubt the essential solidity of the foundations." An evaluation of Baldwin's work is obviously impossible to undertake in passing, but, for the purposes of this study, it is also impossible for it to be dismissed out of hand, since an examination of his findings shows that the practice of having the same actors face off with swords time and time again may have been adopted by Shakespeare's company. This was observed in 1942 by James L. Jackson. He notes that Baldwin assigns these fencing parts to Burbage, in a list which I have re-arranged to approximate the order in which the parts were played, according to Baldwin: Romeo, Talbot, Richard III (three plays), Prince Hal (three plays, although Hal fights only in the first), Hamlet, Macbeth, Coriolanus, and Posthumus, the last assignment being a


61In this sense, it is important to keep in mind that Baldwin's ideas may have been influenced by the theatrical practices of his own time, the 1920s, and had he seen a few seasons at any of the three Stratfords in the 1960s, his views might have been somewhat different.


very tentative one. Baldwin also asserts that in no less than six of those parts, Burbage was facing the same opponent, William Sly, "evidently . . . an expert with his weapon," who is assigned Tybalt, the Dauphin (Henry VI), Young Clifford, Hotspur, Laertes, and Macduff. In each case the fight is a relatively even one. Jackson also notes that two of the remaining opponents to the protagonist, Iachimo and Aufidius, are assigned to John Lowin, who appears to have replaced Sly in this capacity, and would have been, according to Jackson, easily "defeated" in both roles.

Jackson lists Thomas Pope as Shakespeare's (and Baldwin's) third main fencer (Mercutio, York) although he is actually assigned fewer fencing parts than Henry Condell (Paris, Richmond, Cassio, Edgar, and Belarius). This is somewhat puzzling, since the three-way combination of Burbage, Sly/Lowin, and Pope accounts for eight fights, while the three-way combination of Burbage, Sly/Lowin, and Condell accounts for twelve, including the important Edgar-Edmund trial by battle.

Jackson concludes that "Shakespeare consciously planned his plays to utilize the three good fencers [Burbage, Sly/Lowin, and Pope] in the main fencing parts." This verdict is, of course, only as reliable as the evidence on which it is based, but a case might be made, albeit tentative, that the requirements of stage swordfighting were so demanding on skill, and on preparation time, that it is very likely that parts were assigned in order to gain maximum advantage of the

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64 Baldwin, 252.

65 Pope must have had the agility required of a good fencer—he was, at one time, member of a troupe of tumblers which performed in Dresden. Chambers, 2:273.

66 Jackson, 621.
actors' recent experience not only in fighting, but in fighting against specific opponents. In a sense, the need to have breathtaking swordfights with little time to prepare them gives some extra measure of credence to Baldwin's findings.
CHAPTER II

SWORDFIGHTING IN ELIZABETHAN DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

One of the key arguments of this study is to be that Shakespeare's extensive depiction of onstage swordfights in Henry VI represents an innovation in Elizabethan stagecraft, and that no extant play of the Elizabethan period written before Henry VI approaches it in the amount, or dramatic and theatrical effectiveness, of its swordplay. There is no implication intended, however, that Shakespeare invented the idea of having swordfights on stage, any more than he invented stage stabbing, dancing, singing, eating, or any other human activity appropriate to the narrative of the play in question.

Any dramatist is presented with the choices of having a physical action realized on stage with a fair degree of verisimilitude, or having the action presented symbolically, or even of having it occur offstage, then to be reported, or merely heard by the audience, should it have a distinct sound such as gunfire. Shakespeare, it will be seen, was the first Elizabethan playwright to make the choice consistently in favor of actual onstage swordfighting. As Leo Kirschbaum comments:

Shakespeare was an inveterate dramaturgical experimenter from the beginning to the end of his career, and his experiments were always in the direction of greater theatrical effectiveness--theatrical
both in an obvious and subtle sense.¹

Since this study involves the comparison of Henry VI with its predecessors on the English stage, the difficult questions of the authorship and the dates of composition of the Henry VI plays will be considered, along with the dates of composition of the other works to be discussed in relation to Shakespeare's.

**Authorship, Date, and Order of Composition of the Henry VI Plays**

As Leo Kirschbaum and Andrew Cairncross have discussed in detail, 2 and 3 Henry VI were long thought to be Shakespeare's revision of other plays, and 1 Henry VI, if Shakespeare's, was written later as a sort of prologue to the already popular 2 and 3 Henry VI. This climate of opinion has, in more recent times, altered radically, and all three parts of Henry VI are now, almost universally, considered to be solely Shakespeare's.²

In his 1957 examination of the English history play, Irving Ribner gives the likely date of composition of 2 and 3 Henry VI as 1591, and 1 Henry VI 1591 or 1592. In agreement, although without any claim of certitude, Geoffrey Bullough notes that "it may be . . . that [1 Henry VI] was shaped into its present form in autumn 1591 or winter 1591/2,"


and that 2 Henry VI was "probably composed by the end of 1591."

Cairncross, however, also in 1957, and later in 1962, argues that a date of 1590 for both 1 and 2 Henry VI can be established, with 3 Henry VI and Richard III appearing "not long after." 3

To summarize briefly, the reasons for Cairncross' dating of Henry VI are: (1) the reported texts name Pembroke's Men as the actors of 2 and 3 Henry VI, and the reporters, or "pirates," were members of that company, whose operations, as far as the introduction of new plays is concerned, were halted when the London theatres closed in June 1592, (2) Marlowe died in June 1592, and Edward II, also written for Pembroke's Men, clearly shows the influence of these histories, (3) The Troublesome Raigne of King John (published 1591) shows obvious imitation of both 3 Henry VI and Richard III.

Cairncross is particularly precise on the date of 3 Henry VI. He notes that 2 Henry VI is indebted to Tamburlaine (entered 1590), and The Troublesome Raigne is in turn indebted to 3 Henry VI, forcing it into a relatively narrow slot in 1591.

Hanspeter Born, in 1974, asserts that the date of 2 and 3 Henry VI is actually 1592, with 1 Henry VI just preceding it in 1591. This opinion, however, is based on a set of premises of which some are possible but others, while possible, are highly improbable. First, Born argues that 1 Henry VI is "one and the same as the 'harey the vj' mentioned by Henslowe as a 'ne' play, first performed by Lord Strange's men at the Rose on 3 March, 1592," and that this represents the first performance of the work. His next premise is that the three Henry VI plays were written in order, in support of which he offers mostly internal evidence, and that 2 and 3 Henry VI were therefore written

3Bullough, 3:35, 89; Cairncross, ed., 2 Henry VI, xliv.
some time between March 1592, and August, 1592, in time for Greene, who
died on September 3, to somehow obtain a manuscript of 3 Henry VI and
refer to it, before it was either performed or published, in his famous
attack on the "upstart crow."\(^4\)

Even assuming that Shakespeare could have written both 2 and 3
Henry VI in such a short time, the question remains as to why Greene
would have attacked Shakespeare on the basis of only one popular
success, and then, in twisting Shakespeare's own words in the attack,
to have quoted not from this popular success, but from a play that had
never been performed—all this on his deathbed. Born's thesis rests on
such an improbable set of circumstances that the views of Cairncross on
the dates of Henry VI have not seriously been called into question.

The order of composition of the three parts of Henry VI is
connected, in many ways, with the question of authorship, and if the
labelling of the Contention plays as memorial reconstructions is
conceded, then the opinion, most notably held by Dover Wilson, that 1
Henry VI was written after the other two parts, becomes something of a
moot point.\(^5\) Cairncross, citing Alexander's work as revealing "a
number of recollections of 1 Henry VI in the memorial versions," argues
convincingly that "there seems no sufficient reason to doubt Shake-
speare's authorship of the whole play, or that he wrote it in natural
chronological order."\(^6\)

\(^4\)Hanspeter Born, "The Date of 2, 3 Henry VI," Shakespeare
Quarterly 25 (1975): 323-334. To support this claim, Born cites the
fact that Greene used the name Pierce Penilesse in his Disputation
between a He-Conycatchar and a She-Conycatcher, and that if this name
was coined by Nashe, then Greene would have gotten the name by seeing
it in manuscript.

\(^5\)J. Dover Wilson, introd., The First Part of King Henry VI

\(^6\)Cairncross, ed., 1 Henry VI, xxxvi.
This study, therefore, is written with the assumption that Shakespeare was the original author of *Henry VI*, that the three parts were written in chronological order, and that *1 Henry VI*, composed in 1590, is most likely to be Shakespeare's first publicly-performed play.

**Theatrical Swordplay Before 1590**

Not only has discussion of swordplay on the Elizabethan stage been surprisingly scarce, but some of the available material, while stimulating, can be misleading. L.B. Wright, in 1927, and R.E. Morsberger, in 1974, refer to the great number of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays containing swordfights, but both studies are deficient in their not paying sufficient attention to the probable dates of composition of the plays discussed, thereby not affording any consideration of the progressive development of this theatrical phenomenon. Further to this point, when Morsberger writes "in reading through Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas, one cannot help being struck by the great number of scenes involving swordplay," one's concurrence should be delayed, since by "scenes involving swordplay," Morsberger means not only scenes with actual fights, but scenes with any reference to swordplay. Although there are a few plays which Morsberger might have mentioned but did not, it will be demonstrated that *The Battle of Alcazar* is the only definitely pre-Shakespearean play he cites which might be assumed to contain a realistic, onstage swordfight.

Deciding whether or not a swordfight occurs in a play is not as

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8Morsberger, 2.
simple a task as might be supposed. There are the obvious cases, of course, such as Romeo and Juliet, where the dialogue clearly indicates the outline of the stage business, but such occurrences, particularly in non-Shakespearean drama, are in a minority compared with those for which we have only the often unreliable stage directions to guide us. While there has been substantial research into the interpretation of Elizabethan stage directions, there is still a great deal of work remaining to be done on this difficult question.

In the case of battle scenes, everyone is familiar with the often-quoted and often-parodied "alarums" (sometimes spelled "alarms") and "excursions." To deal with "alarums" first: all scholars are in agreement that this term refers only to the noises of battle, and not to onstage fighting. Nor is "excursion" a direction which indicates actual fighting on stage: G.B. Harrison offers differently-worded, but basically synonymous, definitions in his notes to Henry VI:9

Indicates that a party of soldiers runs in and across the stage (1H6. 3.2.35.SD)

Men running to and fro, indicating the fury of battle (2H6. 5.2.71.SD)

Rapid movements, indicating a battle (3H6. 2.3.0SD)

Cairncross, in the Arden 1 Henry VI, gives "the passage across the stage of small bodies of soldiers in simulation of a battle."10

Their use of the words "indicating" and "simulation" is interesting, as it implies that the business is symbolic, and that the


10Cairncross, ed., 1 Henry VI, 71. It should be noted that "battle" (however spelled) is often used to indicate an army itself or the manner in which its troops are deployed, as well as the activity of fighting.
actual portrayal of swordfighting is therefore precluded. In my discussion of the early Shakespearean histories, I will argue that this is a misleading implication, and that an "excursion" often does include actual onstage combat, although there is no specific stage direction for it.

Peele, in The Battle of Alcazar, and Lodge, in The Wounds of Civil War (both discussed below), make clear use of the word "skirmish," each time unambiguously asking for actual combat that is visible to the audience, although in the case of Peele's play, it could easily mean not swordfighting, but gunfire.

In Shakespeare's plays, "skirmish" is found in the stage directions five times: four in 1 Henry VI and one in Cymbeline, both plays having been printed for the first time in F. In 1 Henry VI, three of the four instances give a clear instruction to have onstage brawling between Gloucester's and Winchester's men (1.3.69.SD, 3.1.86.SD, 3.1.91.SD). Only once is the term used for a battle--to show an engagement between Talbot's English and some French troops: "Alarum. Here another skirmish" (1.5.32.SD).

In Cymbeline, we find "... Enter, in skirmish, Iachimo and Posthumus. He vanquisheth and disarmeth Iachimo" (5.2.OSD).

There are some Elizabethan stage directions which have no ambiguity at all. "Let them fight" occurs in Clyomon and Clamydes, and "they fight," frequent in Shakespeare, is also found in one play which is definitely prior to Shakespeare, the anonymous Common Conditions (c. 1576), as well as two plays that might have preceded 1 Henry VI: Greene's Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon, and the
A Taxonomy of Swordfighting

Along with as accurate an understanding of the vocabulary of the stage directions as is possible to gain, another requirement of this study is the establishing of a taxonomy whereby the various sorts of combat can be classified—the swordfighting sequences of, for example, Romeo and Juliet and King John have many more differences than similarities.

The first distinction to be made is that between military swordfighting, as normally occurs during battle scenes, and non-military swordfighting: a fight due to a personal disagreement or other cause that is not directly related to a civil or foreign war. Since this study is limited to the chronicle plays, most, although not all, of the Shakespearean swordfights under discussion will necessarily fall within the former category.

Having made this first division into two broad groups, each group may be classified further. For military fighting, a helpful distinction is one between infantry swordfighting, i.e. swordplay done by supernumeraries portraying common soldiers (Sidney's "four swords and bucklers"), and personal combat involving principal characters, such as Hal versus Hotspur, or Macbeth versus Macduff.\(^\text{12}\)


\(^{12}\)MacIntyre provides an excellent discussion of the different types of battle scenes in Shakespeare—a topic relevant to the subject of this study but by no means identical. MacIntyre, 31-44.
Non-military fights need more than two sub-categories. The first, and most common, is the sudden fight, or street brawl, which has occurred in all periods of history, and (sadly) still does, although swords are no longer used. The most famous theatrical examples of this would be in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Next, there are the formal combats of the medieval age—variously called, for example, trial by battle, judicial duel, trial by combat, duel of chivalry. While this study, as will be shown, requires further and careful distinction even within this group, for the present purpose of examining swordfights in pre-Shakespearean drama, the broader classification will suffice. The best-known example, in history as well as drama, would probably be the Bolingbroke-Mowbray combat which is interrupted by Richard II before it has a chance to proceed.

Distinct from the formal medieval combat is the more modern manifestation of it: what is normally called a duel, i.e. quarrel of honor, fought according to the duelling code which developed in Italy, and a fairly common occurrence in Elizabethan life—vide the death of actor Gabriel Spencer at the hands of Ben Jonson and, on the stage, such episodes as the challenge Benedick offers Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* (5.1). Shakespeare satirizes those in Elizabethan society whose allegiance to the code was more affectation than a sincere wish to protect one's honor—*Love's Labor's Lost* (1.2), *As You Like It* (5.4), *Twelfth Night* (3.4), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2.2 to 3.1),

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13See Chambers, 2:158, 2:341. Jonson boasted to William Drummond that Spencer's sword was ten inches longer than his. Diane Bornstein does note, however, that the Elizabethans talked about duelling a lot more than they indulged in it: "Although duels did not occur very frequently in sixteenth century England, Elizabethan gentlemen loved to read about them, train for them in learning how to fence, and talk about them." Ben Jonson, *Conversations with William Drummond*, 1619, ed. G.B. Harrison (London: Bodley Head, 1923); Diane Bornstein, *Mirrors of Courtesy* (Hamden, Ct.: Archon Books, 1975), 120.
and Cymbeline (1.2 & 2.1). Touchstone's description of his supposed quarrels as a "courtier" and Cloten's boastfulness should not be taken, however, as Shakespeare's contempt for the Renaissance courtier's obsession with honor, or, alternatively, as contempt for the code of chivalry. What Shakespeare deplores, as shown by Mercutio's scathing description of Tybalt (Rom. 2.4), is not the duelling code per se, but its being carried to extremes, with challenges given without genuine cause. Here Shakespeare is in agreement with Castiglione, who advises the Courtier that the cause must be just, but if it is, then one should fight bravely, "and not as some [e.g. Touchstone] doe, pass the matter in arguing and points." Further to this point, it might be said that Shakespeare's contempt for the "duellist" is but one component of his contempt for the courtier or would-be courtier whose ambition is not accompanied by his inner virtue, e.g. Osric, and Oswald—

That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty

(Lr. 2.2.78-79).

While Benedick is so richly comic a character that one must be wary of taking anything he says or does with full seriousness, the overall tenor of his challenge to Claudio (5.1.145-50) is such that there is little cause to suggest that the audience's attitude to it should be as cavalier and dismissive as Claudio's, or that Benedick's behavior is less than admirable in this scene, one of the darkest in the play.

The distinction between a duel and other types of combat is an important one, and requires some discussion; one of the most irritating facets of the research undertaken in the course of this study has been, as will be evident, the misuse of the term "duel" by so many

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"Duel," from the Italian "duello," was just coming into English usage in the Elizabethan age, which is in itself evidence of the Elizabethans' fascination with the custom. As correctly defined by OED, a duel is a formal, pre-arranged combat; therefore no swordfight in Shakespeare's plays should be called a duel, for none is fought according to a formal duelling code (Sir Andrew and Viola never do cross swords), and Shakespeare himself does not use the word, either as verb or noun; Mercutio calls Tybalt a "duellist" (2.4.24), and the term "duello" is given to Armado in Love's Labor's Lost (1.2.179), and by Sir Toby in Twelfth Night (3.4.307).

The use of the word "duel" to mean "swordfight" is common in modern English but is incorrect—in more recent times one thinks of pistols—and OED clouds the issue to a degree by its less than precise third definition for "duel": "any contest between two persons or parties," citing Joshua Sylvester's Du Bartas (1.3.802) as an example of this usage in 1591. Sylvester's comparison of the effectiveness of oleander and aconite as poison, however, uses "duel" as metaphor for formal combat, which is quite different from an alternative definition.

While the distinction between a swordfight and a duel might be trivial in everyday usage, it is anything but trivial in Shakespearean criticism. To refer to the Hal-Hotspur combat at Shrewsbury or the Hamlet-Laertes fencing match as a "duel" is extremely misleading, and it will be argued that the common perception of the Hector-Ajax tournament combat in Troilus in Cressida (4.5) as a "duel" has been a factor in its nearly constant misinterpretation to date. In the following discussions I have attempted to limit the use of "sic" to only those instances where misrepresentation of a swordfight as a "duel" in the critical literature cited is of particular importance; otherwise the constant reminder could prove an annoyance to the reader.
Last, there is swordfighting as a combat sport, either in a tournament or a more modern fencing match, where there is no intention, given the good faith of the participants, to kill one's opponent. The best known swordfight as combat sport is, of course, the fencing match in Hamlet.

A list might prove helpful at this point:

(1) Military Swordfights:
   (a) Infantry
   (b) Principal Characters

(2) Non-Military Swordfights:
   (a) The Sudden Fight or Street Brawl
   (b) Medieval Formal Combat, often called "Trial By Battle"
   (c) The Elizabethan Duel
   (d) Sport--Tourneys and Fencing Matches

In Harbage's Annals of English Drama, revised by Schoenbaum, eighty-two extant plays, relevant to this study, are listed as coming between 1552, the probable date of Ralph Roister Doister, the earliest extant play of any note which is associated with the Elizabethan age, and 1590, the probable date of 1 Henry VI. Those considered "relevant" are plays identified by Harbage and Schoenbaum as comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, interludes and moralities of all sorts, and heroical romances. Excluded from consideration as being too far in dramatic form or performance conditions from Shakespeare's early plays.

15 Harbage lists the likely date of 2 and 3 Henry VI as being 1591, with 1 Henry VI coming later in 1592. These dates appear to be based on the now outmoded view that Shakespeare used the Contention plays as sources, and wrote 1 Henry VI after 2 and 3 Henry VI were popular successes. In view of the more recent scholarship by Cairncross and others, I have, for the purposes of comparing the Henry VI plays with their predecessors, set them in 1590. In all cases, where there are doubts about a play's date, and these doubts are relevant to this exercise, the matter is discussed. Alfred Harbage, Annals of English Drama, revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964).
are Latin plays, closet dramas, wedding masks, royal and civic pageants, and royal receptions and entertainments. Remarkably few of the remaining eighty-two have swordplay of any sort; all those that do are discussed below.

Each category of swordfight, as listed above, will be taken in order, with discussion of plays containing such fighting proceeding, as far as is convenient, in chronological order. Also discussed will be some plays which are noteworthy in their not having any swordfighting, although their plots, themes, or reputations would lead one to assume, before careful examination, that they do. Before proceeding, however, a brief digression is necessary, as mention should be made of the pre-Elizabethan Robin Hood plays, c. 1475.

Wright notes:

Contests of strength and skill furnished much of the dramatic interest in the Robin Hood plays. In the fragment of Robin Hood and the Knight, containing only forty lines, there are five distinct contests: a shooting match, a stone throwing match, a wrestling match, a fight in which Robin kills the Knight, and a battle with the Sheriff's men.16

It is sad that so little of the Robin Hood plays survives, as they may, as did much else in the early folk drama, have influenced the development of the English history play—an influence Ribner argues is of importance.17 In terms of the theatrical use of swordplay, though, these fragments, coming over a hundred years before Henry VI, and performed as part of a much earlier and very different theatrical tradition, offer little that is elucidative for our purposes.


17Ribner, 61-62.
Military Swordfighting--Pre-Shakespearean Drama

To look at infantry fighting first: how often, before Shakespeare, do supernumeraries, be they playing English, Roman, or other soldiers, portray a battle on stage "with three rusty swords"?

An interlude by Pikeryng, Horestes, which Marie Axton places in the late 1560s, is the earliest play requiring comment. Axton considers it quite unusual among Tudor interludes, defined as "dramas of about a thousand lines, playable by a company of six to delight and instruct intelligent audiences for about an hour-and-a-half," in that it has elements of Senecan tragedy but at the same time possesses "a sunny cheerfulness about political solutions that is positively Brechtian." There are stage directions in the play which appear to indicate some lusty infantry fighting: "go & make your lively battel & and let it be longe eare you can win the city" (1. 870. SD), and "stryke up your drum & fyght a good whil, & then let sum of Egistus men flie & and then take hym & let Horestes drau him vyolentlye" (1. 920. SD).

Alan Dessen speculates that these fights might have assumed a "standard choreography," and that the author was "perhaps thinking of such fights as a practical way of filling in time." It is likely that Dessen is correct, although for a reason which he does not give: the fights would not have been realistic because, as Axton notes, interludes such as Horestes were performed with small casts, probably in a great hall of some sort, and the extras who fought in the battle scenes were most


19Dessen, Elizabethan Stage Conventions, 175.
likely "children from the Chapel and St. Pauls."\textsuperscript{20}

From Pikeryng's interlude, the only one with anything which could justifiably be described as a battle scene, we must advance approximately twenty years to \textit{Tamburlaine}, a play (referring here to both parts) which, according to David Riggs, strongly influenced Shakespeare in his development of a theatrical form for the early histories.\textsuperscript{21} As \textit{Tamburlaine} is one of the most warlike of plays, with battle after battle, one might assume that in filling the stage with swordfights in \textit{Henry VI}, Shakespeare was only doing what Marlowe had done before him. However, \textit{Tamburlaine} contains little or no real swordfighting, as Marlowe almost invariably prefers to have a fight occur offstage, and either have a witness report it or simply show the result of the fight by the nature of the action in the ensuing scene.

Harbage remarks upon this point:

We think of Marlowe's \textit{Tamburlaine} as a succession of mighty battles. Hostile groups are constantly entering with drums and trumpets to confront each other on the stage, whereupon come alarms to combat followed by gloating speeches and the display of disarmed captives. But the stage directions make it clear that entrances to battle are exits from the stage. The only military action displayed is the first five acts is Tamburlaine's pursuit of Bajazeth across the stage, and in the second five acts an ascent to and exit from the rear gallery localized as the walls of Babylon.\textsuperscript{22}

As a good deal of theatrical warfare is indicated by the stage directions in \textit{Tamburlaine}, they deserve careful scrutiny. The first mention of combat is before 2.4:23

\begin{enumerate}
\item Axton, 30.
\item Riggs, 5.
\item Harbage, \textit{Theatre for Shakespeare} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 52.
\end{enumerate}
To the battaille, and Mycetes comes out alone with his Crowne in his hand, offering to hide it.  

(2.4.OSD)

After 2.4, there is a similar sequence:

Sound trumpets to the battell, and he [Mycetes] runs in. [Enter] Cosroe, Tamburlaine, Theridimas, Menaphon, Meander, Ortygius, Usumcasane, with others.  

(2.5.OSD)

The entrances shown above are followed by dialogue indicating that hostilities are over, and as there is no action implied between those entrances and the exits preceding them, one may conclude that any fighting is done offstage. Since the second "to the battle" is preceded by the words "sound trumpets," it appears that the first stage direction is merely an abbreviated means of giving the same instruction. This view is further justified by the stage direction at 3.3.201, discussed below.

The next battle sequence, before 2.7, reads as follows in the Bowers edition:

Exeunt to the Battell, and after the battell, enter Cosroe wounded, Theridimas, Tamburlaine, Usumcasane, and others.  

(2.7.OSD)

Although the 1590 Octavo reads "enter" in place of Bowers' first "exeunt," I believe Bowers to be correct; having two entrances without any intervening exit is confusing, and in this context, "enter to the battle" would indicate an action of running across the stage and exiting towards an offstage battle, where Cosroe receives his wound.

In act three Marlowe depicts the battle between the forces of Tamburlaine and those of Bajazeth. Starting in 3.3, the war is clearly in the tiring house, seen and reported by the women onstage: "They sound the battell within, and stay" (3.3.189), and a few lines later, "To the battell againe" (3.3.201).

As the only action between these two stage directions is continued
reporting by the women, and as the word "againe" appears in the second stage direction, it may be assumed that the second direction is a shortened version of "sound to the battell againe," therefore not implying onstage swordfighting.

There is a possible indication at 1.212 of an onstage fight, although it is not clear:

Bajazeth flies, and he [Tamburlaine] pursues him. The battle is short, and they enter, Bajazeth is overcome. (3.3.212)

The use of the present-tense "is" for Bajazeth's being overcome, after the "short" battle offstage, could mean that he is "overcome" personally in an onstage fight at the end of the conflict, but in view of the manner in which the other fights are (not) presented in this play, it is more likely that the author of this stage direction--Marlowe or bookholder--meant something along the lines of "Bajazeth having been overcome," particularly in view of the fact that the phrase is preceded by a comma and not a period.

Finally, at 5.1.402, a stage direction reads "They sound to the battaile. And Tamburlaine enjoys the victory, after Arabia enters wounded." In this instance, some onstage infantry fighting is again possible, but it is difficult to say exactly what, in terms of onstage action, is meant by "Tamburlaine enjoys the victory." It is more likely that this is a reminder for an offstage shout of triumph, as it seems illogical for Arabia to "enter" wounded if the fight is not off in the tiring house. Furthermore, it is apparent that Zenocrate remains on stage for the entire sequence. If this interpretation of this final stage direction is accurate, then Harbage is indeed correct in stating that Tamburlaine has no visible swordplay whatsoever.

2 Tamburlaine shows an attitude to swordfighting no different from that of its predecessor. Before 2.3 there is more offstage fighting:

41
"Sounds to the battaile, and Sigismond comes out wounded" (2.3.0SD).

There is a parley in 3.3, at the gates of Balsera—the Captain of Balsera and his wife Olivia appearing "above,"24 with Tamburlaine and his allies making the challenge from the main stage. The final call to battle and the ensuing action is indicated as follows:

**Techelles.** Trumpets and drums, alarum presently,  
And souldiers play the men, the hold is yours.

**Enter the Captaine with his wife and sonne.**

**Olymipia.** Come good my Lord, and let us haste from hence  
Along this cave that leads beyond the foe,  
No hope is left to save this conquered hold.

**Captaine.** A deadly bullet gliding through my side,  
Lies heavy on my heart, I cannot live.  
(3.3.62-3.4.5)

Obviously there is a missing "exeunt" after Techelles' speech, and my assumption is that he and his troops would "storm" the upstage center discovery-space, although it is possible the missing stage direction indicating their exit might have called for an assault on the upper platform with scaling ladders, as occurs in 5.3. In any event, it is doubtful that the soldiers would be doing any swordfighting on stage, particularly in view of the fact that the Captain says he is wounded by a bullet—prophetic words, as this is thought to be the play which had a fatal shooting accident, presumably in 5.1, when pot-shots are taken at the Governor of Babylon, hanging in chains from the walls.25

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24I have not found any opinion which states that characters appearing on the walls of a city would be anywhere but on the tiring-house gallery. This feature of the Elizabethan stage is called by a variety of names, e.g. "gallery," "balcony," and "inner-above." I have adopted Andrew Gurr's "tiring-house gallery" as it is clearly distinguishable from the galleries (or balconies) in the auditorium. Andrew Gurr, The Shakespearean Stage: 1574-1642, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 124.

25Described in Chambers, 1:265.
At 5.1.62 there is the assault mentioned by Harbage: "Alarme, and they scale the walles," and finally, in 5.3, we have the climactic battle between the forces of Tamburlaine and those of Callapine, which is clearly offstage:

Tamburlaine. I know it wil Casane: draw you slaves,
In spite of death I will goe show my face.

Alarme, Tamburlaine goes in, and comes out againe with all the rest.

(5.3.112-14)

It is interesting to speculate whether or not the casting of Tamburlaine had something to do with the absence of swordfighting, since a study of the Edward Alleyn manuscript of Orlando Furioso (discussed below), reveals that at least at this point in his career, there was an apparent inclination on someone's part, perhaps his own, to have Alleyn do less rather than more fencing.

The Famous Victories of Henry V, which Ribner dates c. 1588, and which, in only 1550 lines, covers the span of events in all of 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV, and Henry V, has little, and perhaps no, visible combat. None of the wars with the rebels appears in the play, and in reference to the Battle of Agincourt, the one stage direction reads:

Strike Drummer. Exeunt omnes. The Frenchmen cry within, St. Dennis, St. Dennis, Mount Joy, St. Dennis. The Battel. Enter King of England, and his Lords.

(1. 1215)

Bullough, in his introduction to The Famous Victories, notes that "incidents of battle are shown in the stage, as in Henry V (4.4-7)." What Bullough means by "incidents of battle" is not entirely clear, although if he is referring to swordfighting, it is doubtful that he is correct, as it will be argued that there is no such visible combat in Henry V, with the possible exception of a brief comic

26Bullough, 4:334.
encounter as Pistol captures the French soldier in 4.4. In the Famous Victories, the words "the battell" do not necessitate swordfighting, particularly since the play makes far more of Henry's tactics with the longbow, emphasized in Holinshed, but replaced by Shakespeare, as Bullough correctly observes, with rhetoric. 27

Lodge's Roman play, The Wounds of Civil War (c. 1588) 28 is clear in demanding some onstage fighting, although not in its initial battle sequence, which is before 1.2, as the first engagement in the civil war between Scillas and Marius is shown:

A great Alarum; let young Marius chase Pompey ower the Stage, and old Marius chase Lucretius: Then let enter three or fowre souldiers and his Auntient with his cullors, and Scilla after them with his hat in his hand, they offer to flie away.

(11. 333-6)

Before 5.1, however, with the appearance of the word "skirmish" in the stage direction, some swordplay is called for:

A great skirmish in Rome and long; some slaine. At last enter Scilla, triumphant, with Pompey, Metellus, Citizens, souldiers.

(11. 1932-34)

This is also the case before 5.2:

Alarum skirmish a retreat, enter young Marius uppon the walles of Preneste with some souldiers all in blacke and wonderfull mellancoly.

(11. 2071-73)

After young Marius' speech on the walls there is a stage direction

Alarum aretreat [sic]

(1. 2103)

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27 The Crispin's Day speech is equivalent to a speech in The Famous Victories in which Henry calmly gives his archers tactical orders (Bullough, 4:333).

and before 5.3 the stage direction reads:

Enter with drum and souldiers Lucretius, with other Romaines, as Tuditanus &c.

(11. 2117-18)

The group entering is that which is besieging Praeneste. There is a parley, during which Young Marius stabs himself, some others on the walls follow suit, and Lucretius's exit speech reads:

Come, let us charge the breach. The town is ours. 
Both male and female, put them to the sword; 
So please you Scilla, and fulfill his word.

A little skirmish, a retreat: enter in royaltie Lucretius.

(11. 2216-19)

If the date of The Wounds of Civil War is indeed 1588, Lodge's play is the earliest extant example of an Elizabethan play with onstage military fighting which may be assumed to have been realistic. Since the play is known to have been acted in 1594 by the Admiral's men, albeit possibly in a different version, its presentation by a company known to have performed "feats of activity,"29 and in a playhouse with its own association with fencing, would, as has been argued, imply that any fighting done onstage would have been done in verisimilar fashion.

Peele's The Battle of Alcazar is the last drama before Henry VI with battle scenes which, depending upon one's interpretation of a badly corrupted text, could contain infantry fighting. Since it also shows some indication of fighting amongst principal characters, however, a few other plays, later than The Battle of Alcazar, will be commented upon first, thereby allowing Peele's play to be discussed in toto.

A play which may contain onstage infantry fighting, but cannot be

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29 See above, 7.
shown with any certainty to pre-date 1 Henry VI, is The True Chronicle History of King Leir, dated by Harbage c. 1590, but by Ribner c. 1594. In his more recent study, Bullough gives an approximate date of 1590, but he also states that Leir might have been influenced by Thomas Lodge's Rosalynde (1590), which would place it at least slightly later.30

Another such play is The Troublesome Raigne of King John, which Cairncross and others have argued persuasively is imitative of Henry VI. There is even the possibility, as argued by Honigmann, that the play is a bad quarto of Shakespeare's King John.31

Locrine, attributed to Greene, but about the authorship of which there is great doubt, does have a good deal of swordfighting, but Jane Lytton Gooch, in her 1980 critical edition of the play, notes that the text we have might be a revision of an earlier work, now lost, and that the extant Locrine "contains numerous borrowings from contemporary poetry and drama, published in the period 1590-1594."32 It therefore seems reasonable to place Locrine after Henry VI.

The very title of The Battle of Alcazar, c. 1589,33 gives one the impression that there must be a swordfight on every page, but once

30 Bullough, 7:281.


again the lover of swordsmanship displays would be disappointed with this work. Unfortunately, it survives only in what appears to be a corrupt quarto of a very short 1452 lines, so any conclusions about the play must remain tentative. John Yoklavich notes that Peele has made his play "full of sensational effects," and that "the historian's huge canvas of the battle scene was translated into the 'Alarums' and 'Skirmidges' familiar in all Elizabethan stage battles."34 The first of these indicates that only an offstage action is required:

Sound an alarum within, and enter a messenger.

MES. Flie king of Fesse, king of Moroccus flie .

(1. 280)

The actual "skirmishing" starts at 1. 1300:

Alarums within, let the chambers be discharged, then enter to the battell, and the Moors flie.

Skirmish still, then enter Abdelmelec in his chaire .

(1. 1300.SD)

With brief interruptions for dialogue, and Abdelmelec's death, the battle continues:

A long Skirmidge, and then enter his brother Multy Mahomet Seth.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Alarums. Enter to the battaile, and the christians flye. The Duke of Avero slaine.

(11. 1336.SD-1366.SD)

It can be argued that in the staging of these sequences, more emphasis was placed on firearms than on swordfighting. At 1. 1134, Abdelmelec, in giving his orders, refers to "choice harguebuziers" [harguebusiers], and there is also mention of bullets "thick as hail" (1. 1147). In view of these points, it is less than certain that the ensuing "skirmidges" require swordplay. Firearms were indeed used in the Elizabethan theatre, as shown by the abovementioned fatal

34Yoklavich, ed., 225, 245.
accident, and it should be remembered that the actual Battle of Alcazar occurred only twelve or so years before the play was performed, thereby requiring the greater degree of historical accuracy expected of a dramatist when re-creating an event within recent, living memory.

Even if the foregoing sequences do contain swordfighting, it would have been performed, as far as one can tell given the state of the surviving text, by the rank-and-file soldiers. No principal character has been named so far as being involved in a swordfight.

The next military action is the first in this study to involve a principal character. At 1. 1384, Stukley is engaged in a fight with two Moors: "Alarums within, and they runne out, and two set upon Stukley, and he driveth them in." This may be assumed to have been an exciting combat, as the outnumbered hero drives his adversaries offstage, much as Troilus does while fighting Ajax and Diomedes (Tro. 5.6). Upon Stukley's re-entry, he is set upon by two Italians in his own service, Hercules and Jonas, who kill him. In this instance, the text is not totally clear in telling us how much swordfighting (if any) occurs. Hercules challenges Stukley to

Stand traitor, stand ambitious English-man,
Proud Stukley stand, and stirre not ere thou die... (11. 1430-1431)

and Stukley, after seven lines of Hercules' grievances, accepts the challenge in this manner:

Avant, base villaines, twit ye me with shame
Or infamie of this injurious warre?
When he that is the judge of right and wrong
Determines battaile as him pleaseth best.
But sith my starres bode me in this tragick end
That I must perrish by these barbarous Moores,
Whose weapons have made passage for my soule
That breakes from out the prison of my breast,

35See above, 42.
Ye proud malicious dogges of Italy,
Strike on, strike downe this body to the earth
Whose mounting mind stoopes to no feeble stroke.
    Stab him.  

(11. 1432-50)

The immediate direction instructing the Italians to "stab him," without first calling for a fight, along with Stukley's reference to perishing by the weapons of the Moors, not the Italians, and his refusal to offer a "feeble" stroke, leads to the conclusion that Stukley was wounded (offstage) in the previous fight (1. 1384.SD), and that his death here (after an in extremis speech of forty-eight lines) is the simple stabbing of an already-hurt man, and not a swordfight. If such is the case, then Stukley's "driving them in" at 1. 1384 is the only sword-fighting in The Battle of Alcazar, with the possible exception of some prior swordfighting by the footsoldiers in the skirmishes, assuming that they were not depicted exclusively with firearms. The play is significant, however, as it is an early example of swordfighting on the battlefield involving a principal character, for this type of combat is to be found in only one other extant play which might predate Henry VI: Greene's Comicall History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon.

John Clark Jordan summarized some varying opinions on the date of Alphonsus in 1915. He notes that J. Churton Collins, in his 1905 edition, dated it 1591 or later, as he saw imitation of Spenser's Complaints, published that year. Greg attacked this theory, finding the similarities to Spenser of little significance, and argued that the play was composed about 1587, a view which Jordan, noting that Alphonsus "is the earliest play to come to us from Greene's pen," accepts, along with Ribner, who dates the play as c. 1588.36

The first fight occurs at 1. 391:

Strike up alarum. Enter Flaminius at one doore, Alphonsus at an other, they fight, Alphonsus kill Flaminius . . .

Following this action are five examples of stage directions which indicate one party chasing another across the stage. Some infantry fighting is possible in such actions, of course, but is by no means definite:

Belinus offers to strike off Albinius head, strike up alarum, enter Alphonsus and his men; flie Belinus and Fabius, follow Alphonsus and Albinius.

(1. 622.SD)

Strike up alarum: flie Belinus, follow Laelius: fly Fabius, follow Albinius: fly the Duke of Millaine, follow Miles.

(1. 720.SD)

Amuracke draw thy sword. Alphonsus and all the other kings draw theirs, strike up alarum, flie Amuracke and all his companie.

(1. 1651.SD)

Strike up alarum, flie Amuracke, follow Alphonsus, and take him prisoner: carry him in. Strike up alarum, flie Crocon and Faustus. Enter Fausta and Iphigina, with their [all female] armie, and meeete them.

(1. 1676.SD)

Strike up alarum: flie Alphonsus, follow Iphigina . . .

(1. 1723.SD)

Later there is a second indication of personal combat between principal characters, although this presents an unusual staging requirement, since one of the combatants is a woman:

Alphonsus and Iphigina fight, Iphigina flie, follow Alphonsus.

(1. 1780.SD)

Greene, then, is the first Elizabethan dramatist to exploit the playhouse's association with combat sport to any significant degree in a historical play. Although there is an important difference between Greene's technique and Shakespeare's—in Greene the fighters do not speak to one another, whereas in Shakespeare they normally do—one is still led to ask if this might be the idea that the "upstart crow" stole from his rival, and not the spoken poetry of Henry VI. For if
"Shake-scene" was a thief as Greene charged, why would his thievishy be necessarily limited to dialogue? It is impossible to tell, but interesting to guess.

There is a slight indication that military swordfighting between principal characters occurs in Soliman and Perseda, attributed to Kyd, although all quartos are anonymous. As is the case with Alphonsus, deciding on a date is extremely difficult. F.S. Boas argues that the play follows The Spanish Tragedy, as it is more probable that Kyd, if he is indeed the author of Soliman, would have expanded the story of the play-within-the-play in The Spanish Tragedy rather than condense a subject about which he had already written a full-length piece. Boas therefore places Soliman "towards the close of Kyd's chief dramatic period, about 1588, or possibly a few years later."37 If it was, as Boas suggests, written a few years after 1588, it takes Soliman past the 1590 which Cairncross has argued is appropriate for 1 Henry VI.

In act three of Soliman and Perseda, there is a confused battle sequence in which two major characters are killed. Philippo, the governor of Rhodes, and the Prince of Cyprus, desiring to engage with the Turks, enter with some soldiers. Philippo instructs the Prince to "take [to] the tower," while he

... with the rest will down unto the strane [strand]:
If we be beaten back, weele come to you;
And here, in spite of damned Turkes, weele gain
A glorious death or famous victorie.

(3.3.5-8)

Brusor, the Turkish leader, enters immediately with his soldiers, asking a parley with the citizens of the town, and the Prince of Cyprus

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appears at once on the walls:

Come, fellow Souldiers, let us to the breach
That's made already on the other side. (3.4.14-15)

Although we have heard nothing of Philippo's success or failure at the strand, the stage direction following Brusor's exit reads:

Exeunt to the batel. Phylippo and Cipris are both slaine.

Enter Brusor with Souldiers, having Guelpio and Julio, and Basilisco, with Perseda and Lucina, prisoners. (3.5.OSD)

Since the exeunt is "to the battle," and no further entrances are indicated, the probable action is one of Philippo and Cyprus both being slain offstage. If there is an onstage fight, the lack of any lines for two important characters before, during, or after their fatal encounters indicates a technique similar to that used by Peele and Greene, where the fighting is kept strictly apart from the dramatic dialogue.

As noted previously, Edmond Ironside has scenes of military combat, but, as far as can be determined, it appears that they were not verisimilar in presentation.

Before proceeding with non-military fighting, it might be interesting to look at another play which, contrary to what one might expect, is without dramatic single combat: The True Tragedy of Richard III, which Ribner feels might have been written as early as 1588-89, since the final speech of tribute to Queen Elizabeth contains the lines "she hath put proud Antichrist to flight," i.e. she has defeated the Armada.39

38See above, 16-17.

39Ribner, 86. Bullough says it was "probably written 1590-92." Bullough, 3:237.

52
Assuming for the moment that the play does pre-date Henry VI, we meet another problem: it survives only in a very bad and self-contradictory text, and a reliable impression of the action on Bosworth field is impossible to obtain. The end of Richard's pre-battle oration and the ensuing text is as follows in the original quarto:40

KING. . . . Sirs you that be resolute follow me, the rest go hang yourselves.

The battel enters, Richard wounded, with his Page.

KING. A horse, a horse, a fresh horse.

PAGE. A[h] flie, my lord, and save your life.

KING. Flie villaine, looke I as tho I would flie . . . what more I have to say, ile make report among the damned soules.

[Richard and Page] Exit
Enters Richmond to battell againe, and kils Richard.

Enters Report and the Page.


The action is made unclear by the absence of an entering stage direction for Richard, in order for him to meet Richmond in combat. The "againe" of Richmond's entrance (l. 2002) is also confusing: Richmond has not previously participated in the fight. Furthermore, the Page's task in the speeches immediately following the action shown above is to report, in some detail, Richard's death directly after losing his mount in a fight with Richmond on horseback:

... Richmond did prevaille, & taking Richard at advantage, then he threw his horse and him both to the ground, and there was woorthie Richard wounded, so that after that he were recovered strength. But to be briefe, my maister would not yeeld, but with his losse of life he lost the field.

(11. 2028-2033)

Of course, whenever one is dealing with a corrupt text, deciding which

40Quotations and line references are from W.W. Greg, ed., The True Tragedy of Richard the Third (London: Malone Society Reprints, 1929).
of two mutually exclusive passages is genuine is difficult and at times virtually impossible, but since the stage direction indicating onstage single combat is inconsistent with the rest of the text on two grounds—Richmond's entering "again" and the Page's description of Richard's death—the most likely inference to be drawn, assuming the True Tragedy of Richard III is earlier than Shakespeare's play, is that the dramatic single combat between Richard and Richmond is Shakespeare's invention.41

The number of times, then, in pre-Shakespearean drama, that principal characters meet on the battlefield for verisimilar personal combat, as do York and Clifford or Macbeth and Macduff, is limited to three: once in The Battle of Alcazar, and twice in Alphonsus.

The Sudden Fight

The next category of fighting is one which is more common in pre-Shakespearean drama, but is by no means ubiquitous—the street-fight, or brawl, or sudden quarrel. While such disagreements are normally settled by fists or bullets in the modern stage, cinema, and television, reflecting, and many say influencing, contemporary society, so in Shakespeare's time the ever-present sword was used for the same purpose, both in the playhouse and in everyday life. As mentioned above, Shakespeare did not invent the idea of having these fights on stage—such a common event was bound to be seen in the popular drama as a matter of course, and it has been argued that there was a theatrical tradition of such fights being verisimilar when occurring in plays falling within the genre of heroic romance. One such play, as has been

41Legge's Richardus Tertius has clear stage directions indicating that all fighting is done offstage. Robert J. Lordi, ed., Thomas Legge's Richardus Tertius (New York: Garland, 1979).
noted, is Clyomon and Clamydes (c. 1570), which features a combat, presumably with sword and shield, between Sir Clyomon, Knight of the Golden Shield, and King Thrasellus of Norway:

THRAS. Alas poore boy, thinkest thou against me to preuaile? Here let them fight, the King fall downe dead. (ll. 1376-77)

Common Conditions (c. 1576), which is not extant in its entirety, contains a fight between the hero, Lamphedon, and pirates who, earlier in the play, threw him overboard and abducted his love, Clarisia. This fight is amusingly indicated, in the obviously damaged text, by the stage direction "they fig."42 Later on, finding that Clarisia has supposedly been sold as a slave to a knight called Cardolus, Lamphedon seeks him out and challenges him. Although there is no stage direction, the text implies an immediate fight, presumably with sword and shield, in which Cardolus tires and Lamphedon has him at his mercy.43 These fights are indeed the stuff of romance, as they are similar to the many encounters in Malory in which a knight-errant must rescue a lady or, as Larry D. Benson describes it, "abolish some 'ill custom.""44

Porter's Two Angry Women of Abington (c. 1588), is the next extant play with a sudden fight, and it is strictly comic: Dick Coomes and Nicholas Proverbs face off with sword and buckler, but since it is all done in the dark, they cannot see one another to land any blows.45

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42 Farmer, ed., 231.
43 Farmer, ed., 239.
This would have been, and is, in plays such as Peter Shaffer's Black Comedy, a fascinating challenge for the actor: to play pitch-blackness on a brightly lit (be it by the sun or electric lamps) stage.

There is also a sudden fight in 2.1 of Soliman and Perseda, the date of which is discussed above, as Ferdinand is given the lie by Erastus, and then is killed in the encounter which immediately ensues, as described later by Piston: "with that they drew, & there Ferdinando had the prickado" (2.2.21).

We return to Greene and Marlowe for our next, nearly identical, examples, which are found in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay (c. 1589), and The Jew of Malta (c. 1590). In Friar Bacon, Lambert and Serlsby have a rapier and dagger fight (11. 1852-56), in which they, as seen through Bacon's magic glass, simultaneously stab one another, while in The Jew of Malta (3.2.4) Lodowick and Mathias do exactly the same. Although the weaponry in this instance cannot be determined with certitude, the fact that Barabas says "O bravely fought! and yet they thrust not home," would indicate rapier and dagger, since the rapier was the thrusting weapon. As a sidelight, it is interesting to think about the great similarity between these two scenes in the context of Greene's resentment of "Shake-scene." Is there another thief at work here as well? If there is, the difficulty in dating the plays leaves us with an open question, as with Alphonsus and Henry VI, of "who might have been stealing what from whom?"

The next play requiring discussion is Greene's other well-known

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46 See above, 51.

work, Orlando Furioso (c. 1590). As might be expected, considering the identity of the main character, Elizabethan audiences would have been expecting onstage combat: indeed, F.E. Schelling, after discussing Clyson and Clamydes and Common Conditions, immediately proceeds to Orlando, calling it "the acme of these earlier heroical comedies."49

Orlando provides us with much information about the practices of the Elizabethan theatre, thanks to the survival of much of Alleyn's personal script. Mörsberger mentions Greg's study of the Alleyn script, noting that in this personal "acting version," there is less swordfighting than in the later quarto of 1594. This is most noticeable in the episode (11. 1525 to 1530 of Q) in which the disguised Orlando fights with the three peers of France: first with Oliver, then Turpin, and then finally with Oger. Greg notes that the Quarto has much more emphasis on action, and less on rhetoric, than the Alleyn part does, and that "in the present episode it (the Quarto) perhaps sought to increase the attraction of the scene by concentrating on a series of those displays which were so popular with certain sections of the Elizabethan public."50

The stage directions in the Quarto indicate the action as follows:

He fighteth first with one [Oliver], and then with another [Turpin], and overcomes them both.

(1. 1525)

They [Orlando and Oger] fight a good while, and then breathe.

(1. 1530)

48W.W. Greg, ed. Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: The Battle of Alcazar and Orlando Furioso (London: Malone Society, 1922). Quotations and line references for both Q and the Alleyn manuscript are from this edition.


50Greg, Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements, 225.
Continuing with the Quarto, after Orlando and Oger "breathe," they halt the fight when Orlando's identity is revealed. In the Alleyn manuscript the order and identity of Orlando's first two opponents is different, and the third fight, with Oger, is definitely reduced. Oger's speech in recognizing Orlando, according to Greg, "seems to have been purposely introduced to lead to a recognition without having to fight it out," and Greg goes on to suggest that the actor playing Oger might have been the better fencer, and would have objected to being defeated by Alleyn before an audience knowledgeable of fencing.

Indeed, there is other evidence afforded by comparison of the Quarto with the Alleyn manuscript to support Greg's view that the swordfighting was purposely increased in the 1594 quarto. Orlando's swordfight with the three peers of France, which Greg discusses, is the last in the play; it may be instructive to look at the previous ones, in order:

At 1. 440 there are "alarums," but no fighting onstage is indicated, and then at 11. 760-770, the Alleyn manuscript shows an interesting variation from the Quarto. In this episode, Orlando's madness has taken hold. He attacks the shepherd (Sacrepant's man disguised), and apparently drags him offstage, where he tears his leg off. Orgalio, who has seen all this, and is the only person remaining on stage, calls for help, and then there is the immediate entrance of the Duke of Aquitaine and his soldiers, followed four lines later by the re-entrance of Orlando "with a leg." He calls for horses

... all of burnished gold,
Saddles of cork because I'll have them light.
For Charlemagne the Great is up in arms.

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51Greg, Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements, 346.
And Arthur with a crew of Britons comes
To seek for Medor and Angelica.

So he beateth them all in before him [stage direction].

(11. 765-70)

The Alleyn manuscript is damaged at this point, but what remains, from the left side of page, is interesting:

and Arthur with a crew
to seek for Medor, and
Follow me, for now I
out away . . .

(11. 115-18)

Greg notes that the two final lines of Orlando's speech are omitted in the quarto.52 He does not mention, though, that the interpolated words "follow me" have the effect of cancelling any swordplay—he no longer "beateth them all in." This is consistent with the other features of the Alleyn manuscript which have the effect of giving him less fencing to do.

The two other fights (1. 981, 1. 1370), are not a part of the Alleyn manuscript, the former because that section has been lost, and the latter because the fight occurs within the speech of another character, Sacrepant, which would not be included in a manuscript intended only for Alleyn's personal use. While it is clear that Alleyn did some fencing as Orlando, the evidence cited above does give much credence to Greg's view that the swordfighting was increased to cater for what the public was more desirous of seeing in 1594 than it was in 1590, after Henry VI, Richard III, and probably Romeo and Juliet.

Formal Combat--Trial by Battle

We now come to the next classification of the theatrical swordfight: the formal combat, fought in accordance with the medieval

52Greg, Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements, 225.
code of chivalry, often called "trial by combat" or "trial by battle."

The climactic combat of Palaemon and Arcyte (1566), as described
by John Bereblock, has been discussed above, so we may immediately
return to Edmond Ironside, which concludes with the legendary encounter
of Edmond and King Canute for the right to rule England, although
Edmond, like Cymbeline, wins the battle only to treat the loser as if
he were the victor. The stage directions indicate some fierce
fighting:

The Trumpitts sound the Armies doe Compasse the Twoe kings in the
middest, they fight.

CAN. Stay: hould thie hand I prethee breth a while

EDM. Not tell thou yealdst or dies.

Edm: drives Canutus about.

CAN. Staye, Edm:
  tis not for I fiere thie fortitud
  That thus I crave thee stay, but that I wante
  the use of breth to prosecute the fight.

EDM. Then breath awhile, I giv the leave torest

(11. 1978-85)

The combatants rest during eight lines of commentary from the
spectators, and then are ready to fight again:

EDM. Whay are yee reddy

CAN. I to bee thie death
  they fight againe Edm: drives Canutus backe aboute the Stage.

CAN. Staye Edmond staye.


It is difficult to know what to make of this sequence. Since the
earlier battle scene is so clearly symbolic, drawing on the tradition
of the morality play, it is odd that this encounter is apparently, on
the basis of the dialogue and stage directions, a more realistic one.

53See above, 18.
but then the entire play is, as noted above, so uncertain, that a
definite conclusion cannot be drawn.

Formal Combat--The Elizabethan Duel

In our penultimate category, the duel based on some quarrel, and
fought according to the duelling code, we find, as least as far as can
be ascertained from extant plays, that it was avoided by Shakespeare's
predecessors as totally as it was by Shakespeare himself.

In the comedy Misogonus54 (c. 1564), there are some antics
involving a challenge, much as there are in Twelfth Night. Although
the fight never eventuates, it is of interest here, since there are
several mentions of the various weapons used in duels of this era. Of
particular note is the fact that the words "sword" and "rapier" are
used interchangeably, in order to maintain the rhyme scheme.

MISOGONUS. ... I am to fight a match.
An olde cankred churle doth me chalings and deare

ORGALUS. Yow are able your selfe a dosin to dispatch
Year a man by S Sampson ery length of a spare [sic]

MISOGONUS. But how if he bringe with him buckler sworde
What fence shall I use my hede for to save

ORGALUS. Your conninge is good man care not a tourde
Yeare able to canvas the dasterdly knave

MISOGONUS. Thou werte wonnte to tell me pretye feates of warre
My venues to give and my vauntage to take.

ORGALUS. For your fensuar I warrent yow nede not to care
with your many lookes yow will make him to quake.

MISOGONUS. Nay, but I pray thee, show me one cross caper
And how I should ward my head and my heart.
Were I not best, of need be, to draw out my rapier?
Tell me, by the mass, or I'll make thee to fart.

ORGALUS. Cross caper? Cross legs. I told you the fence.

(1.4.22-37)

54All quotations and line references are from R.W. Bond, ed.,
Early Plays from the Italian (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911).
Misogonus is the only pre-Shakespearean play I have been able to find with any action specifically relating to the duelling code, and Misogonus comes no closer to an actual fight than does Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

**Formal Combat--Sport**

The last category, swordfighting as combat sport, in which there is no intention to kill or seriously injure one's opponent, has one representative, and for it we must return to Soliman and Perseda, while keeping the uncertainty of the play's date in mind. Upon his arrival, and welcome, at the Turkish court, Erastus is offered a friendly combat by Soliman:

SOL. A vertuous envie pricks me with desire
To try thy valour, say art thou content?

ERAST. I, if my Soveraigne say content, I yeeld.

SOL. Then give us Swords and Targets: -
And now, Erastus, thinke me thine enemie,
But ever after thy continuall friend;
And spare me not, for then thou wrongst my honour.

Then they fight, and Erastus overcomes Solyman.

I have found no other combats of this type in extant pre-Shakespearean drama.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, out of the approximately eighty-two extant plays that were written, as far as scholars have been able to determine, between Ralph Roister Doister and 1 Henry VI, remarkably few have scenes of sword play which may reasonably be assumed to have been enacted in a verisimilar fashion:

(1) Military Swordfighting

(a) Infantry: The Wounds of Civil War
(b) Principal Characters: The Battle of Alcazar
Alphonsus

(2) Non-Military Swordfighting:

(a) Sudden Fight: Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes
Common Conditions
Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay
The Jew of Malta
Orlando Furioso (date?)
Soliman and Perseda (date?)

(b) Trial by Battle: Palaemon and Arcyte
Edmond Ironside

(c) Elizabethan Duel: none

(d) Sport: Soliman and Perseda (date?)

The conclusion to be drawn from this section of the study is that
by including, as it will be demonstrated, the many scenes of exciting
onstage swordfighting in the first tetralogy, and making them
thematically integral by combining them with dialogue, Shakespeare was,
as he was in so many other ways, an innovator, and that this innovation
is more than a by-product of the subject matter of the plays, since
many of the plays mentioned above portray a good deal of military
action, only to have their authors choose to indicate that action in
symbolic, rather than realistic, fashion, or to place the action
offstage altogether.
CHAPTER III

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH
HISTORIES--ARMS AND ARMOR

The next topic to be considered is the weaponry the Shakespearean
stage soldier and knight were likely to have used in the two
tetralogies. Would Talbot, Joan, York, and the English and French
footsoldiers have fought with weapons similar to those of the fifteenth
century, or would the actors have used Elizabethan weapons?

The Weaponry of the Common Soldier

To discuss the offensive weaponry of the footsoldier in the Eng-
lish campaigns in France and the Wars of the Roses first, saving armor
for separate consideration, a difficulty immediately presents itself:
the use of any sword by footsoldiers in Henry VI, at least as a battle
commences, would be in some respects unhistorical--military historians
are in agreement that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the
sword was far less important than either the bow or the pike.

One of the many contributors to The Ancient Art of Warfare
explains that the French neglected the infantry and even the crossbow,
as only mounted knights mattered to them. The English, meanwhile,

... placed all their faith in the Welsh longbow ... the English
infantry was composed essentially of pikemen who got down on one
knee and stuck their weapons into the ground at such an angle as to
break the force of the enemy cavalry charge. Unlike the French,
the English reinforced their infantry with large numbers of bowmen.1

Shakespeare makes more than one allusion to the use of pikes by the English infantry in the Hundred Years' War. Pistol asks the disguised Henry V "trail'st thou the puissant pike?" (4.1.40), and the report of Talbot's capture in 1 Henry VI attributes the disaster to the fact that "he wanted pikes to set before his archers" (1.1.116).

Terence Wise notes that at the start of the Hundred Years' War swords were hardly used at all by the infantry: "the sword in particular was regarded as a special weapon of the nobility . . . [although] sometimes archers carried a crude short sword called the falchion."2 The falchion had a curved, sharpened edge, and was thicker toward the point: a cutting rather than a thrusting weapon.3 Lear refers to his skill with one as a young man:

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip.

(5.3.277-78)

Wise also mentions that by about 1450 (the siege of Orleans was 1428/9), almost all European infantry was armed with swords for close fighting if the bow proved ineffective in keeping the enemy back, if the supply of arrows was exhausted, or if the bow was not usable for other reasons, such as fog or snow—a point taken up below in discussion of the battles of Towton and Barnet in 3 Henry VI. Both infantry and cavalry regularly carried daggers, however, and as

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3There is a magnificent Venetian falchion (c. 1490) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Holinshed tells it, at Agincourt "the English archers cast awaie their bowes, & took into their hands axes, mails, swords, bills and other hand weapons, and with the same slue the Frenchmen." 4

So if Shakespeare wished to have his infantry in Henry VI fight with period weapons in a "historically accurate" manner, he would have had to employ a group of bowmen firing arrows into the audience, or somehow show pikemen repelling a cavalry charge. Since neither of these effects was theatrically possible, it would have been necessary, if intending to show infantry fighting, to depict hand to hand combat, and either indicate through action or dialogue that this combat was after the other means of defense were no longer appropriate, or treat the whole sequence metaphorically and let the infantry use swords as a symbol of all other types of fighting.

Going to the other extreme and assuming that the English and French troops would be outfitted with Elizabethan weapons is of little help in determining how they would have fought on stage. By Elizabeth's time, as C.G. Cruickshank observes, "the most important military development ... was the victory of fire-arms over the older missile weapon, the long-bow." A 1589 order of the Council supports this view: a company of one hundred soldiers, it says, should have sixty fire-arms, thirty pikes, and ten halberds or bills, implying that the infantryman whose chief weapon was a sword did not exist.5 The Elizabethan archer, however, like his late-medieval counterpart, did indeed carry a sword in anticipation of hand to hand combat; this was a


maximum thirty-six inches long. He also carried a ten- to twelve-inch dagger, and the musketeer and the pikeman were similarly equipped with sword and dagger to supplement their main weapons. It is not surprising, then, that the exchequer accounts of 1580-1600 show that eleven thousand swords were issued for the forces in Ireland. For such sequences as the siege of Orleans, however, Shakespeare's company would have had to make the same justifications in having its supernumeraries use swords while outfitted as Elizabethan soldiers as it would if they appeared as medieval ones.

The Armor of the Common Soldier

To turn to the topic of armor, the first question concerns the type worn by the ordinary footsoldier in the time of Henry VI. The Ancient Art of Warfare is very clear on this point:

For reasons of economy and weight, an infantryman's armor could not be compared to that of a knight. Instead of wearing a bassinet, a footsoldier protected his head with a mail or plate helmet or simply an iron hat. To protect their bodies, archers and crossbowmen wore coats, not of mail but of rings attached to a thick leather corselet which was known as a broigne. Two centuries earlier, this garment had constituted the principal body defence for knights. Foot soldiers wore a brigandine, a kind of breast-plate composed of linked metal plates. Other evidence, which does nothing to contradict this view, can be seen in the many illustrations found in 14th and 15th century chronicles, which, although they may be about the wars of Julius Caesar, depict their soldiers in contemporary dress, very much as described in the passage quoted immediately above.

By Shakespeare's time the advances in firearms had rendered armor virtually irrelevant, although the fact that hand to hand fighting

6Cruickshank, 166-17, 120.

7Boudet, 1:390. See also Ashdown, 255-60.
still occurred made some protection desirable. Cruickshank notes that the Elizabethan archer wore a steel cap and a jack, which was "a coat made of small overlapping metal plates." 8 At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, the pikeman, who did all his fighting at close quarters, had body armor which

... included a corselet (a metal shell that gave all round protection to the body), poultrons, vambraces, tasses (metal plates protecting the shoulders, arms, and thighs, respectively), and gauntlets ... as the reign progressed there was a tendency to lighten the armor in the interests of increased mobility. 9

There was little difference, then, between the relatively inexpensive armor worn by the infantry of Henry VI's time and that worn in Elizabeth's time.

There is one most interesting reference to the stage armor of, if not a footsoldier, a "non-commissioned officer" in Shakespeare: the "points," i.e. laces used to fasten a breastplate, 10 are included in Doll Tearsheet's tirade at Pistol in 2 Henry IV: "Since when, I pray you, sir? God's light, with two points on your shoulder? Much!" (2.4.132-33).

It is possible that Doll is referring to what she sees on Pistol's person at that moment, giving his armor a decidedly Elizabethan aspect; of course, Pistol is in many respects an anachronistic character right down to his name, as even the earliest wheel-lock pistols were not known in England in the time of Henry IV. 11 This is one possible indication, then, that the outfit of the Shakespearean soldier in the

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8 Cruickshank, 116.

9 Cruickshank, 116-17


11 Ashdown, 368.
chronicle plays was basically Elizabethan, but a note of caution to be
given before reaching any sweeping conclusion is that much of the comic
business in 2 Henry IV revolves around a satire of Elizabethan military
practices. Therefore, Pistol and the rest of his gang may have been
dressed in a way to make the satire as telling as possible. In later
discussion of Henry IV, particularly with reference to Falstaff's
pistol-case at Shrewsbury, it will be argued that the Falstaff scenes
are, indeed, Elizabethan, and would be so costumed, while the military
scenes involving the royal party and the Percies would be medieval in
appearance.

Fortunately, we have one fascinating piece of evidence which is
concerned with the weaponry and armor of the Elizabethan stage soldier:
the drawing of a scene from Titus Andronicus, made in 1595 by Henry
Peacham. The two soldiers to the left of Titus are both in Elizabethan
costume, and appear to be wearing breastplates—the soldier nearer Titus
being in some sort of brigandine, with plate protection for the
shoulders and arms attached. Vesey Norman and Don Pottinger note that
the breastplate of the soldier nearer Titus might be embossed in
imitation of the chest muscles seen on the statues of Roman generals, a
practice indulged in for the elaborate armor of ceremonial occasions.12

It is more difficult to see what the soldier to the far left is
wearing: there is obviously a hat rather than a helmet, but the
thickened shoulders and arms, even allowing for the overall crudity of
the drawing, might represent plate protection; there also appears to be
a cuirass under the sash. R.A. Foakes, in the most complete discussion
of the Peacham drawing to date, offers the opinion that he might be

12A.V.B. Norman and Don Pottinger, Warrior to Soldier: 449 to 1660
dressed to suggest an "eastern costume, Turkish or Persian perhaps."13

Both soldiers carry halberds; the less-protected soldier on the far left has a falchion or scimitar, and the other is wearing the standard thirty-six-inch sword, judging its approximate length by its relationship to the overall estimated height of the soldier and the angle at which it sits (again, with allowances for the drawing's crudity—Tamora kneeling is as tall as Titus standing, unless the lines on the stage floor are imaginary rises in the "ground"). Titus has a much longer sword, apparently a rapier, and Aaron, like the soldiers, appears to be holding the standard variety, given that the distance between his left hand, by his hip, and his right, not fully extended, would be approximately thirty-six inches.

The soldier immediately to the left of Titus wears an Elizabethan helmet. There are other indications in Shakespeare that such headgear was used in performance; J.W. Fortescue notes that Shakespeare mentions the burgonet, "an open-faced headpiece with a ridged crest."14 This would give the actor excellent protection against blows, but of course would leave the eyes unprotected, which has obvious implications for the choreography of the fights, both in Shakespeare's time and our own.

The Peacham drawing has more important implications for the dress of the medieval knight, and they will be considered in that context. For the present, some conclusions might be offered regarding the weaponry and armor of the footsoldier in the Shakespearean histories.


14Fortescue, 1:131.
It is likely he used the standard thirty-six-inch sword when involved in fighting, wore an Elizabethan jack, or something that looked like it: armor of metal plates sewn on to canvas. As this is essentially the same as what was worn by a fifteenth-century footsoldier, the theatrical effect would have been approximately the same as afforded by genuine period costuming of the infantry. This weaponry and armor would have been readily available to Shakespeare's company; the standard sword was ubiquitous and the jack would be easy to obtain or fabricate.

As to the use of a shield by footsoldiers, drawings of c. 1595 show a pikeman and another soldier, otherwise armed only with a sword, as carrying one, and it is probable that these soldiers' stage counterparts used the same implements for "defence." That shields were used in fencing, during Shakespeare's time, may be learned from any of the manuals of the day, and Sidney's famous complaint mentions the bucklers of the four soldiers who represent two armies.¹⁵ It is important to remember that parries with the sword were not the most important means of defense, and that the modern actor should be equipped to accept strong blows against his armor. The fact that so much modern stage fighting has the Elizabethan sword used alone in the fashion of modern foil or sabre is what makes it appear foolish, as it so frequently does--literally the "random clinkings" that Wilson Knight deplores.¹⁶

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¹⁵Fortescue, 1:130 ff. The definition of "shield," "target," and "buckler" is discussed below, 83-89.

¹⁶G.W. Knight, Shakespearean Production (London: Faber, 1964), 76.
The Weaponry of the Knight

As it will be argued that an important feature of Henry VI is the type of military fighting amongst principal characters, it is most important to have a careful look at the weaponry the real Talbot and Clifford fought with. Wise explains that at the start of the fourteenth century,

There was only one type of sword, apart from the falchion . . . and this remained similar to that of Viking times; a blade between thirty-three and thirty-six inches long, flat and wide, and tapering slightly from the hilt to form an obtuse point. A broad central groove—the fuller—ran almost the full length of the blade, serving to lighten it and yet maintain rigidity . . . swords of this type weighed 3-4 pounds and when swung with a stiff arm action were capable of literally shearing off a head or limb.17

Some changes were seen in the early fourteenth century: a longer, heavier blade, capable of giving a blow heavy enough to get through plate armor protecting arms and legs was developed. These swords, with four-foot blades, could be held with one hand, but had a long grip to facilitate two-handed use if desired. As some felt that this weapon, in an attempt to make it suitable for one- or two-handed use, was rendered ideal for neither, it came to be called the "bastard-sword," but it remained in use until Shakespeare's day.18

Another development was the two-hand sword: in 2 Henry VI (2.1)

17Wise, 68. See also William Reid, Weapons Through the Ages (London: Peerage Books, 1976), 42.

18A bill of challenge to a tournament during the reign of Henry VII is entitled "Petition and Articles of 4 Gentlemen Challenging all Comers to the Lawnde of Greenwich, To the Feate called the Barriers, with the Casting Speare, and the Targett & with the Bastard-Sword, Point and Edge Rebated," in Francis Henry Cripps-Day, The History of the Tournament in England and in France (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1918), II. See also Reid, 42; A.V.B. Norman and G.M. Wilson, Treasures from the Tower of London, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich (London: Lund Humphries Ltd., 1982), 44. The celebrated painting, "The Battle of Pavia," in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, shows armed knights fighting in both the one- and two-handed style with swords of the same approximate length.
Gloucester and Winchester, in conversation unheard by the others present, arrange a single combat to settle their grievances, and Winchester whispers to his rival to "come with thy two-hand sword" (2.1.45). This weapon, as Alfred Hutton notes, was of "immense weight," and "of such a ponderous nature that it was no easy matter for even a stout fellow to manouvre it well . . . it approached six feet in length from pommell to point." The most complete discussion of the use of this extraordinary weapon is in the treatise of the Elizabethan fencing master Giocomo di Grassi (1594), although as his tactics often include a recommendation to remove one hand from the grip and make a one-handed thrust—there is a picture of a fencer carrying out this move—I would guess that the weapon discussed is closer to a bastard-sword, as the type of weapon described by Hutton is clearly one which would have to be used with two hands at all times. Further to this point, the instruction manuals of George Silver (1599) and Joseph Swetnam (1617) both compare the use of the two-hand sword to that of

19Alfred Hutton, The Sword and the Centuries (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 35. Even a particularly strong man would need both arms to use the claymore (Scottish two-hand sword) on display in the British Museum. Winchester's comment to Gloucester is probably ironic.

20Giocomo di Grassi, "Giocomo di Grassi his true Arte of Defence: Plainlie teaching by infallible Demonstrations, apt Figures and Perfect Rules the Manner and forme how a man without other Teacher or Master may safelie handle all sortes of Weapons aswell offensive as de-

21Di Grassi, 121

22Silver, "Bref Instructions upon my Pradoxes [sic] of Defence, for the true handling of all Manner of weapons together with the fower grownds & the fower gourners wch gourners are left out in my pradoxes wtout the knowledge of wch no Man can fight saf," in Jackson, ed., Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals, 615-20; Joseph Swetnam, The School of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence, 1617 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, Early English Books 1475-1640, reel 1190), 134-48.
the much lighter short staff. Indeed, Silver recommends a strong and very quick thrust with the staff while leaning backwards, to defend against a blow coming from above:

Against such a on give the slypp in this sort, sodainly dray back the hyer prte o yor body a lyttle & yor for most foote with all, & slypp in the point of yr staf undr his staf, and thust single at him, & fly out with all, so shal you be sure tu hyt him & go out free.23

Only a man of very great strength could accomplish this with the longer two-hand sword.

Many mounted men in the fifteenth century chose to carry a falchion as well, and improvements in armor from about 1350 onwards, which rendered most "blows" ineffective, led to the development of the estoc, later called an arming sword, which was designed as a thrusting weapon with which one could penetrate the chinks of an opponent's armor. The estoc proved popular, but never fully replaced the slashing variety, as only the most accurate thrusts could find a weak spot in plate protection, while others would glance harmlessly off.24

So by the time of Agincourt and the siege of Orleans mounted knights carried two swords: a long bastard- or two-hand sword, hung from the saddle, and a shorter estoc, although, as Wise observes,

By the mid fifteenth century full plate armor had become so expensive that only the nobles and princes could afford it and many of the lesser knights reverted to mail with partial plate. This led to a return of the old-style slashing sword, but keeping a sharp point. These types of blade remained unchanged for the rest of the fifteenth century.25

If the Warwick and Clifford of 1590 fought with period weapons,

23Silver, "Bref Instructions," 617.


25Wise 71-72. See also Reid, 42.
then, they might have used either the bastard sword, the estoc, or the standard slashing sword; given the weight of the two-hand sword its use in the playhouse would be most unlikely. Shorter swords could be used in combination with a shield or dagger, although by 1450 the shield was not often used by mounted knights, and was normally seen only at tournaments.\textsuperscript{26} It is important to note that knights such as Talbot did, indeed, normally fight on foot; the horse, being too easy a target for the opposing bowmen, was kept in reserve behind the main lines of battle. The French nobles, throughout the Hundred Years' War, foolishly persisted, in general, in remaining mounted, the basic cause of some of their more famous defeats. For close combat on foot, as Oman notes, short, heavy weapons are best.\textsuperscript{27}

What would have been seen in the Elizabethan theatre if the actors who portrayed knights and members of the nobility used the military weaponry of the Elizabethan knight, i.e. what was, for them, "modern"? First, there is the point that as warfare became more modernized through the sixteenth century, the nobility no longer customarily took the field as armed knights—we are entering the age of the mounted arquebusiers mentioned in \textit{The Battle of Alcazar}.\textsuperscript{28} By the time of the writing of \textit{Henry VI}, the sword had virtually ceased to be any other than a ceremonial or dress weapon, and so there is little Shakespeare could have taken from the military swordfighting practice of his own day—there was none to speak of. The sword worn in ceremonies such as the Accession Day Tilts, a feature of Elizabeth's time which is

\textsuperscript{26}Wise, 45.

\textsuperscript{27}Boudet 1:391-96; Oman, 2:378.

discussed in detail below, was little different from one of the varieties of medieval weapon, such as the shorter slashing sword, although some contemporary paintings show knights wearing the longer rapier, very popular in England by this time, and used more for thrusting than slashing.29

The texts of the plays themselves are of little help in choosing a sword for Talbot or Hotspur: although the rapier was longer than the standard sword and used in a different manner, Shakespeare uses the terms "sword" and "rapier" interchangeably, as can be seen clearly in Clifford's murder of Rutland in 3 Henry VI:

RUT. Ah, gentle Clifford, kill me with thy sword
And not with such a cruel threatening look.

CLIF. Such pity as my rapier's point affords.

As the young Rutland might not know the difference, an example from Othello may prove instructive: the same weapon, belonging to Roderigo, is called both a rapier and sword in the space of a few lines:

IAGO. Here, stand behind this bulk, straight will he come.

ROD. 'Tis but a man gone. Forth my sword; he dies.

In Richard II, Fitzwater, offering a challenge to Aumerle, refers to his rapier's point--

And I will turn that falsehood to thy heart,
Where it was forged, with my rapier's point.

--while Surrey, several lines later, in returning a challenge to

Fitzwater, says:

That lie shall lie so heavy on my sword,
That it shall render vengeance and revenge . . . (4.1.66-7).

It is clear from these three examples, where either the same weapon, or at least the same type of weapon, is referred to by both terms, that the choice in each case is governed only by whether a one- or two-syllable word will better serve the iambic pentameter of the verse.

The Armor of the Knight

To determine the stage armor of the knight is more difficult than doing so for the infantry, as the differences between medieval and Elizabethan gear are greater. That the principal characters did, indeed, wear armor, is easily demonstrated, as there are several scenes in Shakespeare where a character arms or disarms himself on stage,30 such as Macbeth (5.3), and Antony and Cleopatra (4.4 & 4.14). There are also numerous mentions of armor in pre-battle activity, e.g. Richard III (5.3), and even allowing for all the concessions to convention that an Elizabethan audience appears to have been asked to make regarding what it was "actually" seeing as compared with what it was told it was seeing, the complete omission of armor would have appeared, at such points, to be wildly incongruous.

To look, again, at the fifteenth century, we learn that the armor of the nobility was both heavy and cumbersome, an event brought about largely by the devastating effect of first the cross- and then the long-bow. It was by then entirely of plate, with the armorers' difficult task was to provide maximum mobility, "with slots to allow

30There is an interesting discussion of the problem of donning and removing armor on the Elizabethan stage in Martin Holmes, Shakespeare and his Players (London: John Murray, 1972), 150-67.
plates to slide over each other." Their work is described in Henry V:

The armorers, accomplishing the knights,
With busy hammers closing rivets up,
Give dreadful note of preparation.

(4.prov.11-14)

Oman notes that "we have arrived at a time [the early fifteenth century] when middle aged knights of a stout habit of body died of heart-failure in battle, without having received any wound, as did Edward of York at Agincourt, and when, at the end of a long fight on a sultry day, masters were seen supported by their pages, lest they should lose their footing and be unable to rise again." Holinshedd's account of Agincourt describes the grisly sight of bowmen, with axes and maillets, finishing off the knights unable to move.

While this type of armor was still worn in Elizabethan times for ceremonial occasions, it was obsolete for military purposes. Viscount Dillon notes that in battle the rich wore either a simple cuirass and headpiece, a brigandine, or a privy coat, which is a mailed shirt.

Most textual references to armor are interesting only as illustrative metaphor, and do not refer to armor seen on stage at that time, e.g. "what stronger breastplate than a heart untainted" (2H6. 3.2.232), and "Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof" (Mac. 1.2.54). There is a reference to the beaver (the lower portion of the helmet visor, although Shakespeare sometimes uses it to mean the entire

32 Oman, 2:377, 2:384; Bullough 4:396.
helmet) and cuisses (thigh guards) in 1 Henry IV, as Vernon describes Hal and his comrades approaching Shrewsbury, a passage much disputed due to the uncertainty of what is meant by the avian similes:

... All furnish'd, all in arms; All plum'd like estridges, that with the wind Bated, like eagles having lately bath'd, Glittering in golden coats like images, As full of spirit as the month of May, As gorgeous as the sun at midsummer; Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls. I saw young Harry with his beaver on, His cushions on his thighs, gallantly arm'd, Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury, And vaulted with such ease into his seat As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds ... (4.1.97-108)

Without wishing to enter into the critical debate over the "estridge" and eagle feathers, one's immediate mental picture upon reading Vernon's description of Hal is one of the prince resplendent in full medieval armor, with its "plum'd" helmet. Further to the point, A.R. Humphreys notes that the "images" (4.1.100) are most probably effigies of soldiers, and that "coats = both coats of mail, and heraldic coats of arms," although it could also mean a golden gown over the armor. It must be remembered, however, that this is a heightened description of an offstage event, and does not presuppose that when Hal enters one hundred lines later, the Elizabethan audience would have expected him to be dressed exactly as described by Vernon. Just as the Elizabethans were prepared to accept that they were looking at a rose garden or the deck of a ship only on the basis of the actor's description, they might have been equally prepared to allow Vernon's

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34 There is also, of course, the famous beaver which the Ghost wore "up" in Hamlet (1.2.230).


36 See below, 81-83.
Spenserian depiction of Hal's armor while actually "seeing" something quite different a few minutes later.

How, then, is one to envision the Elizabethan stage prince or knight in battle? A solution to this puzzle might be in the Peacham drawing. What is perhaps more important than its examples of Elizabethan stage armor as used in a play with a classical setting is the apparent mixing of historical periods, with some characters in Roman and others in Elizabethan dress, offering prima facie evidence that this was normal practice in the Elizabethan theatre. As Foakes writes:

The most striking aspect of the group shown is the variety of costume, Goths dressed like Romans, Titus as an ancient Roman, but his two sons or followers in variations of contemporary costume of the Tudor period, and carrying halberds, a Tudor weapon first used in the reign of Henry VII . . . this medley of costumes represents a casual attitude towards both historical accuracy and consistency.37

Michael Hattaway draws a similar conclusion:

... the soldiers are clearly wearing Elizabethan costumes ... the inference we might draw is that occasionally a sort of 'costume property' might have been added to a standard Elizabethan costume. Money was certainly spent on elaborate items of dress for those who played leading roles, but these garments were used to define the natures of those that wore them rather than mark the period of the play.38

The Peacham drawing is not the only evidence pointing to a mixing of periods in the costuming of Elizabethan drama. In Thomas Lodge's Roman play The Wounds of Civil War, c. 1588, there is a stage direction which reads "here let the Senate rise and cast away their Gownes, having their swords by their sides."39 The most reasonable inference

37Foakes, 50-51.


to be drawn is that the senators wore some sort of toga, perhaps not unlike Titus's in the Peacham drawing, over their Elizabethan doublet, hose, and swordbelt. The playhouse inventories amongst Henslowe's papers, first printed by Malone in 1790 but since lost, show that the Admiral's Men had a "senetores gowne and 5 senetores capes" as well as other costume articles which probably had an exotic classical appearance: "lymes," i.e. "limbs" (armor) for "the More" and "Hercolles."40

The drawing, Lodge's stage direction, and Henslowe's inventory combine to suggest the possibility that just as Titus appears to have worn a toga over his tunic, the medieval knight in the histories could have achieved the same effect by wearing relatively light Elizabethan armor and then covering it with a medieval gown.

 Norman and Pottinger note that these gowns, which were worn by soldiers in Tudor times, go back to the twelfth century, when knights would wear one of loose-flowing linen, apparently without functional use, over their armor. Such gowns, which actually go back further than is indicated by Norman and Pottinger (they are in the Bayeux Tapestry), remained in use right through the middle ages; they are seen occasionally on brasses and monuments of the period, most notably on that of Edward the Black Prince at Canterbury, and more frequently in paintings and illuminated books. Barbara Tuchman notes that in the fourteenth century Amadeus VI of Savoy was called the "Green Count" after the green silk gown he wore over his armor, and the armor worn in Elizabethan tilting, discussed below, would also frequently be covered

with a colorful gown to lend the event a medieval flavor.\textsuperscript{41}

This would be a convenient and most effective way of simulating medieval armor on the Elizabethan stage, as well as providing for easier identification of both principal characters and the nationality or other allegiance of the footsoldiers. Identification may indeed indeed have been the "functional use" of such a garment that Norman and Pottinger do not mention.\textsuperscript{42}

The brigandine or cuirass worn under the gown, combined with shoulder and arm protection as seen in the Peacham drawing, would enable those re-enacting the Hundred Years' War or the Wars of the Roses to fight in a realistic manner. The armor itself, being genuine, would have afforded excellent protection against the normal blow or thrust. (This could be one reason why there is no contemporary account of a serious onstage swordplay accident amongst Shakespeare's company. It is only when we arrive in more modern times, when actors wear Schlegel's "mock armor," real armor having gone from a common item to a valuable antique, that we read of some notorious stage accidents.)\textsuperscript{43}

York and Clifford would be able to give heavy blows with a bated

\textsuperscript{41}Tuchman, 239; Norman and Pottinger, 48, 110, 120-21.

\textsuperscript{42}Michael C. Addison notes that heraldic designs on military costumes would give the battle sequences in \textit{Henry VI} "greater verisimilitude." Michael C. Addison, "The Dramatic and Theatrical Form of Military Combat in William Shakespeare's \textit{Henry VI} Trilogy" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1969). 25. Addison's dissertation contains much excellent advice for the director of a modern production of \textit{Henry VI}, and his work will be cited several times during the course of this study. While he discusses the battle scenes of \textit{Henry VI} in detail, however, he does not specifically address the subject of the practicalities or the thematic significance of the swordplay within them.

\textsuperscript{43}See T.S. Graves, "The Stage Sword and Dagger," \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly} 20 (1921): 200-212.
weapon, and receive the same, with either a dagger or shield, along with the armor itself, for defense.

It is certain that principal characters wore helmets at least some of the time, as there is mention of them in dialogue—in the bitter exchange of invective preceding the first battle of St. Albans in 2 Henry VI, Clifford and Warwick mention Warwick's burgonet three times (5.1.200-208), and in Troilus and Cressida, Pandarus points out the dents in Hector's helmet as the Trojan hero passes by (1.2.233). It is not possible to say whether these helmets, presumably of the Elizabethan period, were of the open or closed variety. Illustrations of the period show that closed helmets were indeed used in Elizabethan times, but it is more likely that Burbage "wore his beaver up" to allow clear speech while fighting. There are times when a helmet would have to have been closed, or nearly closed, however, such as the trial by combat in King Lear (5.3), where Edgar must keep his identity secret.

Shields

When dealing with the topic of shields for principal characters, it is necessary to define some terms, as the words "shield," "buckler," and "target" all appear in Shakespeare. "Shield" is more a generic than specific term, and those in illustrations of the late medieval period are either round, or, more often, with a straight top and a tapered bottom. It was held by placing the forearm through straps or cords, as the Red Crosse Knight and Sans Joy of the Faerie Queene demonstrate: "their shining shieldes about their wrestes they tye"

44Shakespeare's England, plate following 1:130. See also Ashdown, 295-301.
A "buckler" is defined by Norman and Pottinger as a very small shield which was held only with the hand while the arm was extended, affording no more actual protection than a dagger, used to beat aside the opponent's rapier, in rapier and dagger fencing. This, therefore, would hardly be the "warlike" implement that Macbeth throws before his body (5.8.33). The customary size of the Elizabethan buckler is also indicated by a reference in Stow's *Annales*, where they are described as "a foote broad." The "target," was round like the buckler, but larger, and was held, like the medieval shield, by straps around the forearm.

Before examining Shakespeare's use of "buckler" and "target," a very brief look at Chaucer might prove instructive. "Bokelers" are to be found only in *Canterbury Tales*, where they are carried by three characters, and not one of them is a knight or soldier: the Yeoman (Prol. 112), the Miller (Prol. 558), and a Cambridge scholar, John (RvT. 4019). The Summoner also has one, but his is made of "cake" (Prol. 668). "Targes," on the other hand, are carried only by heroic individuals, and only in relation to the story of Palamoun and Arcite: the statue of Mars (KnT. 975), the kings assembling for the great tournament, (KnT. 2122), and the soldiers of Theseus (Anelida and Arcyte, 33). Troilus uses a "sheld."

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Closer to Shakespeare's time, Lord Berners' translation of Froissart has Edward the Black Prince giving these instructions to his men for the removal of the body of Robert of Duras: "sirs take the body of this knyght on a targe & bere hym to Poycters." It may be assumed that a shield used for this purpose would have to be a large one.

Does Shakespeare, like Chaucer, makes a consistent distinction between the two types of shield? Hotspur's description of Hal as a "sword-and-buckler" Prince of Wales makes sense as a reference to Hal's supposed disregard of knightly endeavours and his unchivalric behavior. In the same play, Falstaff refers to the one implement by both terms as he gives his version of the robbery at Gadshill:

I am eight times thrust through the doublet, four through the hose, and my buckler cut through and through . . .

(2.4.166-67)

These four came all afront, and mainly thrust at me. I made me no more ado but took all their seven points in my target, thus.

(2.4.200-02)

For those who understand the difference between a buckler and target, and an Elizabethan audience probably would have, the episode is even funnier by virtue of the fact that Falstaff's shield, like the number of his assailants, appears to grow during his account.

Falstaff has a buckler in 2 Henry IV as well, and the image of the corpulent knight too lazy to carry even an undersized shield, as indicated in Q, is also an amusing one: "Enter Sir John alone, with his page bearing his sword and buckler" (1.2.0SD).

All students of Shakespeare are probably familiar with the opening stage direction of Romeo and Juliet, 1.1: "Enter Sampson and Gregory, with swords and bucklers, of the house of Capulet." Although the

matter appears to have escaped the attention of commentators, the logic of this stage direction is questionable, for it is unlikely that bucklers would be carried about by anyone, servant or master, as part of everyday dress. Although it is possible that Samson and Gregory are out looking for a fight, a more cogent solution appears when one remembers that the action of *Romeo and Juliet* begins on a Sunday morning, and therefore Samson and Gregory, although supposedly Veronesi, are in fact going off in very Elizabethan fashion to Verona's version of Smithfield, where many Londoners would meet for fencing contests as well as to see the occasional duel be fought. This tradition is documented in Edmund Howes' continuation of Stow's *Annales*; as Howes describes the scene at Smithfield as it was in about 1579:

This field commonly called West Smithfield, was for many years called Ruffians hall, by reason it was the usual place of Frayes and common fighting, during the time that Sword and Buckler were in use. When every Servingman, from the base to the best, carried a Buckler at his backe, which hung by the hilt or pommell of his Sword which hung before him. This manner of fight was frequent with all men, until the fight of rapier and dagger tooke place and then suddenly the generall quarell of fighting abated which began about the 20. yeare of Queen Elizabeth [1579], for untill then it was usual to have frayes, fights, and Quarells, upon the Sundays and Holidayes; sometimes twenty thirty and forty Swords and Bucklers, halfe against halfe, as well by quarells of appointment as by chance.

The target, in Shakespeare as in Chaucer, is the shield of a knight: *3 Henry VI* (2.1.40), *Coriolanus* (5.4.126), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.3.82, 4.8.31), and *Pericles*, where it appears as a synecdoche for an entire suit of armor:

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48 Howes, 1024, emphasis added. Another passage from Stow about fencing at Smithfield is cited by A. Forbes Sieveking, but the day of the week on which bouts were held is not mentioned. A. Forbes Sieveking, "Fencing and Duelling," in *Shakespeare's England*, 2:391.
To beg of you, kind friends, this coat of worth,  
For it was sometime target to a King.  

(2.2.136-37)

Twice "target" appears to be a specifically theatrical property: Hamlet (2.2.321), and Henry VIII (Prol.15).

The final Shakespearean allusion to a target or buckler which may help to clarify the subject is the indecent pun in Much Ado About Nothing (5.2.17-18), where the buckler represents the female pudenda, the buckler's size rendering it somewhat more precise as a play on words.49

Henslowe's inventory shows that shields were common properties on the Elizabethan stage--no less than sixteen are listed: one shield, one buckler, one copper target, four wood targets, and nine iron targets. Other armaments include seventeen foils, which refers to any (bated) theatrical or sporting sword, eight lances, one spear, one helmet (with dragon), and one "greeve armor," i.e. shin protection.50

The matter of shields having been discussed at some length, it must be added that some historians feel they were not often seen in the later battles of the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses. Sir James Mann notes that "with the full development of plate armor not only mail but also the shield took a less prominent place. Shields disappear from English effigies in the middle of the fourteenth century, and the last instance is that of two effigies of about 1370 at Dorchester." Malcolm Vale agrees in commenting "the shield became redundant once the man-at-arms was encased within a complete suit of


plate." Tuchman, however, offers the opinion that in the fourteenth century shields were used, but were somewhat smaller to allow "a greater freedom of action." 51

It is inevitable that shields would appear everywhere in Malory, who wrote while the events depicted in 2 and 3 Henry VI were actually happening. This does not include only tournaments; they are used by Arthur's knights in pitched battle as well. 52 Malory, however, is something of a disappointment as a source for details of armor, and it is difficult to decide if he is picturing his knights armed as he saw his contemporaries, or as living in a more distant past. He mentions helmets and hauberks (chain mail tunics) frequently, and there are some references to a "jesseraunte," a light coat of mail which, like the hauberk, could be worn under plate armor. I have been able to find only obscure references to actual plate in Malory: armor is "forhewn" in The Tale of Sir Gareth, which evokes an image of solid metal, and in The Tale of the Noble King Arthur there is a reference to the rerebrace and vambrace, which are forearm and upper-arm plate protection. 53

Given that illustrations of the period, which often do picture shields, serve as a counter to the evidence of the shield's non-appearance in effigies, and given that Edward IV promises that he will bear "three fair shining suns" upon his target (3 Henry VI. 2.1.40), it may be assumed that at least some of the time, the Shakespearean knights and

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53 Malory, 1:323, 1:230.
princes of the fifteenth century would have fought with them, as did their counterparts from other historical eras, such as Macbeth (5.8.33) and Aufidius (Cor. 1.6.80). It also appears reasonable, given all the available evidence, to refer to such shields as "targets."

Conclusion

I believe that the available evidence, along with textual indications, shows that Shakespeare's medieval knight would wear light Elizabethan armor which he covered with a gown, giving it a convincingly medieval appearance, and fight with either a standard sword with a dagger or shield for defense, or the longer bastard sword, using either one or two hands, as described by Charles Henry Ashdown:

> It should be explained that in wielding this weapon, the right hand only would generally be used, but upon occasion, in order to give extra effect to a stroke, the left hand could be brought up to the pommel, which was invariably pear-shaped in order to insure a firm grip.54

This basic technique would probably resemble that often described in the Faerie Queene, where the participants, armed in medieval fashion, hack away at each other's shield and armor hoping more to stun, in the first instance, than deliver a fatal blow.55

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54Ashdown, 197.

55e.g. Spenser, Faerie Queene, 1.5.6, 1.6.43. See Vesey Norman, Arms and Armour (Sydney: Universal Books, 1972), 74.
CHAPTER IV

ELIZABETHAN NEO-MEDIEVALISM

The final topic to be discussed in this introductory section of my thesis is one which is central to an understanding of the swordfighting sequences in the chronicle plays—the "neo-medievalist" orientation of much of Elizabethan literature and society. This topic is, of course, of virtually limitless scope; only certain aspects of it can be touched on here, and even they will receive but brief consideration. Discussion will concentrate on two main and interrelated categories: (1) the overall thematic unity of Shakespeare's two tetralogies as a "patriotic epic," and (2) how the patriotism with which, it will be argued, the two tetralogies and King John are deeply concerned, is manifest in those facets of Elizabethan life and art which might be called neo-medievalist.

The Two Tetralogies as Patriotic Epic

Although the idea that the eight Lancastrian histories form a unified composite single work is normally associated with E.M.W. Tillyard,1 it has much earlier beginnings, as this passage from Schlegel shows:

The dramas derived from the English history, ten in number, form one of the most valuable of Shakespeare's works, and partly the fruit of his maturest age. I say advisedly one of his works, for the poet evidently intended them to form one great whole. It is, as it were, an historical heroic poem in the dramatic form, of which the separate plays constitute the rhapsodies. The principal features of the events are exhibited with such fidelity; their causes, and even their secret springs, are placed in such a clear light, that we may attain from them a knowledge of history in all its truth, while the living picture makes an impression on the imagination which can never be effaced. But this series of dramas is intended as the vehicle of a much higher and much more general instruction; it furnishes examples of the political course of the world, applicable to all times. This mirror of kings should be the manual of young princes, from it they may learn the intrinsic dignity of their hereditary vocation, but they will also learn from it the difficulties of their situation, the dangers of usurpation, the inevitable fall of tyranny, which buries itself under its attempts to obtain a firmer foundation; lastly, the ruinous consequences of the weaknesses, errors, and crimes of kings, for whole nations, and many subsequent generations.2

Una Ellis-Fermor, writing at about the same time as Tillyard, considers Shakespeare to have invested the plays with the "spaciousness" and "coherence" of epic material, the former by use of "numerous characters and events," and the latter "by slowly building throughout this series a single image to which the central figures of each play bring, as it is written, a contribution that reveals Shakespeare's imaginative exploration of the field. The theme is not the Trojan War or the founding of Rome, but a composite character, the picture of the king or leader, a study of the man best fitted to fill public office." Ellis-Fermor also makes the useful observation that the picture would seem incomplete if any of the major characters from the eight plays were removed.3

Although Tillyard did not invent, or claim to invent, a perception of the histories as a single work, his pioneering study, first

2Schlegel, 419-20.
published in 1944 and still the cause of much critical debate, bears important implications here. Tillyard's thesis is far from simple, nor does it present a simple view of the plays; Harold Jenkins correctly notes that Tillyard's view does not render the histories less complicated for us, but reveals "in the whole cycle a richness and complexity not fully appreciated before."4

An indication of this complexity of Tillyard's thesis is afforded by the fact that in recent studies both his supporters and detractors summarize it in diverse ways. Furthermore, these studies often provide lists of those whose opinions are in accord with Tillyard's, and those who differ with him; such lists do not boast a very high correlation.5 It should be emphasized that for our purposes the most relevant issue is not Shakespeare's adherence or non-adherence to the "Tudor Myth," but the separate (although related) one of whether the plays, regardless of what "myth" they may contain, are in fact unified, of a piece, and written in the mode of the "national epic." Indeed, Robert Ornstein, the one commentator who appears on everyone's list of "Tillyard disintegrators" since the publication of A Kingdom for a Stage in 1972, considers the Tudor Myth a chimera, but offers no


observation that Shakespeare wrote the histories without an underlying coherent scheme of thought. Although he notes that "the two tetralogies are too separate and too different from one another to be regarded as the complementary halves of a single oddly constructed panorama of English history," he gives no argument to support the statement, and in the previous paragraph writes that Shakespeare "makes the memory of Agincourt and the memory of Bosworth polarities of personal mythic interpretation of England's history." Ornstein's argument appears to be more over what this "mythic interpretation" is.6

In a 1954 article, Tillyard clarifies his view of the histories as forming a single epic:

... one of my main positions [is] that Shakespeare composed his eight plays on English history from Richard II to Bosworth on a single grand conception ... when I call Shakespeare's eight connected history plays epic, with England (or Morality-wise Respublica) for hero, I do not mean that before writing he decided to write eight plays, no more and no less, with just that character. What I do mean is that Shakespeare had steadily in mind certain conceptions of history in general and of the stretch of English history he was concerned with, and that to them he referred, in constantly differing degrees of looseness or closeness, the varied content of the separate plays.7

It is generally accepted that Shakespeare's use of Hall in constructing the narrative of Henry VI was extensive, and, while plot might be "the soul of drama" to Aristotle, it is not of greater importance in this context than what Shakespeare also drew from Hall: A.R. Humphreys, citing Bullough, agrees that Shakespeare owed to Hall "the moral scheme and general shape of his successive reigns ... Hall [gives] form to the curve of events over eight reigns, he underlines morals, and he

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6Ornstein, 31.

heightens the contrasts of fate. In reading Hall after becoming familiar with the two tetralogies, it is hard to believe that their rough outline was not in Shakespeare's mind as he began 1 Henry VI. Hall's prologue, by now well known, although possibly not, as L.C. Knights says, by "every undergraduate," reads in part:

> What mischief hath insurged by intestine devison, what depopulacion hath ensued in countries by civill discision, what detestable murder hath been committed by separet faccions, and what calamitee hath ensued in famous regions by domestical discord & unnaturall controversy.

He lists Rome, Italy, France, Scotland, Germany, and Denmark as countries troubled in their past by such divisions, and accords the Turks' capture of Constantinople to Christian dissension:

> So that all men (more clearer than the sonne) maie apparently perceive, that as by discord greate thynges decaie and fall to ruine, so the same by concord be revived and erected.

When looking at the Lancastrian histories chronologically, one is impressed by Shakespeare's beginning his narrative at exactly the same point as does Hall—the quarrel of Mowbray and Bolingbroke and their appeal before the High Court of Chivalry.

Writing of the time in which Shakespeare's two tetralogies were written, Tillyard refers to the "current ideas of the epic and the contemporary attempts to give them embodiment." He notes that "first, the superiority of the epic over every other literary form was axiomatic in the Renaissance ... and Shakespeare could no more have

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escaped the doctrine than he could have escaped the correspondence of the sun in heaven with the king on earth. Secondly, the idea of the epic was connected with the idea of patriotism."11

Although Tillyard's view is given in the context of Shakespeare's extensive use of Daniel's Civil Wars in Henry IV, it will be argued that the relationship of Shakespeare with the idea of the "patriotic epic" is as evident, if not more evident, in Henry VI, particularly in the portrayal of Talbot as a model of English chivalry, a portrayal which involves more swordfighting in battle than is given to any other character in Elizabethan drama. Swordfighting sequences, of course, represent the visual, rather than the aural, poetic imagery of the plays, and in order to make the forthcoming argument regarding the chivalric or neo-medievalist aspect of this imagery as clear as possible, an examination of other forms of Elizabethan visual imagery, especially those dealing with simulated combat, is required, with particular attention given to events and social phenomena of or near 1590, the year 1 Henry VI was most probably composed.

The Arthurian Legend and English Chivalry

Chivalry is itself so huge a topic that only the most cursory consideration can be given here. It is important to note that from its early development in the twelfth century,12 it had both a practical and symbolic function. The practical aspect, associated most significantly with the laws of war and trial by battle, will be seen to be of importance in gaining a full understanding of the chronicle plays, and will be discussed in relation to specific episodes as they appear in

11Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 248-49.

this study; for the present, we are more concerned with chivalry's symbolic aspect.

It is generally accepted by historians that the reign of Edward III saw major developments in chivalric symbolism: the creation of the Order of the Garter was an important step in giving chivalry a unifying, patriotic character in opposition to its essentially divisive aspect as a code of conduct and social organization by which nobles could conduct their own private, wars, the inherent threat to the power of the crown being obvious. Maurice Keen notes that an important force behind Edward's founding of the Order was to strengthen support of the English nobility for his expeditions into France:

It is clear that one of the major purposes of Edward III's institution of the Order of the Garter was to glamorize the standing of the war he was waging against the King of France—to present the war effort in the light of a great adventure pursued by a noble and valiant company of knights against an adversary who was unjustly withholding from their sovereign his rightful inheritance.13 This "glamorizing" of military service to the crown was carried out by identifying the Order with the Round Table, as is evident from Edward's love of the tournament, or table ronde, such as the one held in conjunction with the great feast at Windsor in 1344.14 Further to this point, in making the Arthurian legend such an integral part of the chivalric code, Edward was recalling a lost golden age as superior to the present. As Larry D. Benson notes:

Chivalry is, among other things, a moral code, and those who admire chivalry are by definition moralists. Morality, of whatever sort, was always better in the past, is always sadly declined in the present, and is therefore in need of revival.15

14Barber, 161-64.
15Benson, 145.
In moving ahead to the reign of Richard III, we find the same attitude clearly apparent in Caxton's introduction to Malory (1485). He is not in the least equivocal in pointing out the moral superiority of Malory's historical figures. His aim in publishing is

... to the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye, the jentyl and vertuous dedes that somme knyghts used in tho dayes, by whyche they came to honour, and how they that were vyccious were punysshed and ofte put to shame and rebuke; humbly besechyng al noble lorde and ladyes wyth al other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede in this sayd book and werke, that they take the good and honest actes in their remembrance, and to folowe the same.16

He sets forth similar sentiments in the epilogue to his translation 1484 of Lull's Book of the Order of Chyvalry, dedicated to Richard III:

[This] book is not requysyte to every comyn man to have / but to noble gentylmen that by their vertu entende to come & entre in to the noble order of chyvalry / the whiche in these late days hath been used according to this book here to fore wretan but forgotten / and thexersytees of chyvalry / not used / honoured / ne exercysed / as hit hath been in auncyent tyme / at whicht tyme the noble actes of the knyghtes of Englon that used chyvalry were renomed thurgh [sic] the unyversal world.17

In proceeding to Tudor times, we see that Henry VII assiduously cultivated his image as Arthur reborn. In her 1922 essay, The Arthurian Empire in the Elizabethan Poets, Lillian Winstanley notes that the evocation of Arthur started from the moment Henry, as Duke of Richmond, landed at Milford Haven:

He published a proclamation to the Welsh in which he claimed that the old Welsh prophecies, those of Merlin as interpreted by Cadwaladr and those of the Eagle, had announced the accession of the true Arthurian blood to the British throne. The Tudors were supported in Wales by a whole class of bards, known as the "Tudor

16Malory, 1:cxlv-cxlvi.


97
bards," who interpreted the so-called prophecies of Merlin and the Eagle in their favor.\(^{18}\)

Further to this theme, as Charles Bowie Millican writes, when Henry VII came to power, he commissioned a genealogical report which traced his ancestry back to Brutus, the legendary Trojan who founded Britain. Millican notes that "the Tudor interest in Arthur ... was something more than a revival of a glorious past of British empire. It was a revival, to be sure, but it was a revival enhanced by the belief that in the Welsh blood of Henry of Richmond the very blood of Arthur had returned to a glorious present of British empire." Tillyard comments that Henry VII showed a strong and "astonishing persistence" in his effort to associate himself with Arthur.\(^{19}\) It is also of interest that Henry named his first son Arthur, and he established an archery society in the Prince of Wales' name, its members assuming those of Camelot's knights. The continued existence of "Prince Arthur's Knights" was later guaranteed by Henry VIII, and Shakespeare makes Justice Shallow a member:

I remember at Mile End Green, when I lay at Clement's Inn, I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show ... \(^{(2H4, 3.2.218-300)}\)

Henry VIII, even before he became king, cultivated the image of the chivalric hero as assiduously as did his father. Arthur B. Ferguson observes "that he saw himself as a reincarnation of those heroes of old is indicated by the care with which he nourished the Arthurian


tradition."\(^{20}\)

Hall's chronicle of Henry's reign has many descriptions of his participation in magnificent tournaments; indeed, Henry narrowly escaped serious injury at a tourney in 1525 when the visor of his helmet failed to close:

... then the duke set forward and charged his spere, and the kyng likewise unadvisedly set toward ye duke: the people perceivynge the kynges face bare, cryed hold, hold, the duke neither saw nor heard, and whether the kyng remembred that his viser was up no few could tell: Alas what sorow was it to the people when they saw the spleters of the dukes spere strike on the kynges hedpiece.\(^{21}\)

Shakespeare evokes a vivid picture of the royal tournament in France at the famous "Field of the Cloth of Gold" meeting of Henry VIII and Francis I of France, and connects it to the world of medieval romance by his reference to Bevis of Southampton:

... When these suns
(For so they phrase 'em) by their heralds challeng'd
The noble spirits to arms, they did perform
Beyond thought's compass, that former fabulous story,
Being now seen possible enough, got credit,
That Bevis was believ'd.

(\(\text{H}6, 1.1.33-38\))

The reign of Henry VIII saw the publication of Lord Berners' translation of Froissart (1523-25), a work whose importance to the Elizabethan perception of chivalric ideals would be difficult to overestimate. As doubtful as the historicity of episodes such as the Black Prince acting as a servingman at dinner to the captured King John of France might be, they are what made Lord Berners' Froissart, as Ferguson notes, "the vehicle by means of which chivalric example was passed on to successive generations of the English gentry ... only


\(^{21}\)Hall, 674.
the histories of Henry V's reign, especially the translation made in 1512 of Tito Livio's *Vita Henrici V*, could begin to rival Froissart as a source of chivalric inspiration."22

Lord Berners is explicit in setting out the aim of his translation:

What condygne graces and thankes ought men to gyve to the writers of historyes, who with their great labors, have done so moche profyte to the humayne lyfe? They shewe, open, manifest, and declare to the redor, by exemple of old antyquite, what we shulde enquere, desyre, and folowe; and also should eschewe, avoyde, and utterly flye: for whan we (beynge unexpert of chaunces) se, beholde, and rede the auncyent actes, gestes, and dedes, howe and with what labors, daungers, and paryls they were gested and done, they right greatly admonest, ensigne, and teche us howe we maye lede forthe our lyves.23

It must also be noted that the reign of Henry VIII was also the time of some reaction to the popularity of chivalric ideals. Of particular note is Roger Ascham's attack on chivalric romances in *The Schoolemaster*, posthumously published in 1570 but probably written at about the time of Henry's death (1547).24

In our forefathers tyme, when Papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, savynge certayne bookes of Chevalrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idle Monkes, or wanton Chanons: as one for example, *Morte Arthure*: the whole pleasure of which book standyth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye.25

The initial point to be made about Ascham's diatribe is that its very existence is a pointer to the currency of chivalric ideas, as no

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22Ferguson, 68-69. Ferguson's comment on the importance of the translation of Tito Livio is questionable—the translation was known to historians in manuscript, but was not published until 1911. See C.L. Kingsford, introd., *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), i-lvi.


24*Toxophilus* was published in 1545.

preacher ever condemned a book which nobody was reading. Second, while it must be recognised that, as Thomas M. Greene notes, Ascham shows considerable sophistication as a critic of poetic style,26 his comment on chivalric romance is nevertheless in the context of an essay whose chief subject is education and the importance of the classics to it; to relate this interesting but limited issue to all of so complex and pervasive a social phenomenon as the Tudor infatuation with chivalry would be questionable. Finally, Ascham's connection of books of chivalry with the "standing poole" of "Papistrie" shows that the "strait-laced Protestant," as Ferguson calls him, owed much of his dislike of chivalric culture to the fact that the latter was an integral part of pre-reformation European society,27 a fact which, paradoxically, was one of chivalry's great strengths in Protestant England. Richard Barber notes that Elizabeth's Accession Day Tilts (discussed below) held much of their appeal as a replacement for the popular ceremonies of the Catholic Church, something that could not have been very far from the mind of Henry VIII, although this is a point which is quite distant from Ascham's pedagogical concerns. A contrast may be drawn in this regard between Ascham and Stow, who, as Rowse notes, missed the old Catholic ways, such as the colorful Feast of St. Paul.28

Ferguson argues that the most important concept to understand


about English chivalry in the reign of Henry VIII is that it represented a transformation from an older, universal, aristocratic moral code with a political function inimical, in part, to the ideal of national allegiance, to something which was more a code of personal conduct which was supportive of that ideal. In a sense, the seeds of reform of the English political system planted by Edward III came to fruition with Henry VIII, as the knight's allegiance was now purely to the king. In referring to Ferguson again, we note that he finds this change exemplified in the works of the Earl of Surrey (1517-47): "we are well on the way toward the romantic, humanistically oriented chivalry of Spenser and Sidney."[29]

Ferguson's allusion to the humanism of Spenser and Sidney leads us to another European work whose composition in Italian during the reign of Henry VIII (1528), and publication in an English translation by the Elizabethan Sir Thomas Hoby (1561) was of great influence: Castiglione's The Courtier. As L.G. Salingar notes, "Ascham, who detested Italy, made an exception of Castiglione,"[30] which leads one to wonder how strong Ascham's dislike of chivalry as a code of conduct rather than as an element of literary romance was, for the Courtier does not mark a break with chivalric ideas. Although Ferguson refers to the chivalry of Castiglione as "de-medievalized,"[31] Frances Yates notes:

The chivalrous cult was far from being only a nostalgic survival; it belonged to present Italianate fashions as well as past traditions. The Italian cult of the impresa was said to derive from the brilliant impression made by the brilliant spectacle of French chivalry, with its badges, during the French invasion of the

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[29] Ferguson, 93-4. See also Ferguson 94-103.


[31] Ferguson, 94.
peninsula. The feudal traditions of courtly love underlie the modern Platonism of the *Cortegiano.*

It is also of interest that the Courtier himself, the Duke of Urbino, was made a Knight of the Garter by Henry VII, and that the ambassador who accepted the honor for him was Castiglione.

In order to make this necessarily brief mention of the *Courtier* as useful as possible, we must jump ahead for a moment into Elizabethan times to look at a major figure whom Castiglione influenced: the life and work of Sir Philip Sidney, as implied by Ferguson's abovementioned comment, is itself an indication that Renaissance humanism and neo-medievalism are not necessarily exclusive of one another. The author of *The Defence of Poesie,* the work which, as noted above, contains a strong attack on the style of dramaturgy Shakespeare was later to adopt in *Henry VI,* was also the author of *Arcadia,* with its medieval tilts and combats, and was the knight of the Garter who, like Talbot, gave his life while fighting for his Prince in a foreign expedition. As Diane Bornstein writes:

Sidney brilliantly played the roles of courtier, soldier, scholar, poet, patron, and lover, and won the approval of his age as the embodiment of Castiglione's ideal.

To return to our discussion of the development of chivalry during the reign of Henry VIII and to bring it to a conclusion, it might be said that in invoking the memory of Arthur, Henry found an ideal means of carrying out a second, political "Reformation" in the minds of his subjects. Arthur was, as Ferguson notes, a British national hero, and

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33Ferguson, 206.

34See above, 2.

35Bornstein, 115-16.
however distant the public understanding may have been from the true military history of the Hundred Years' War, the great victories at Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt were accomplished by heroes strongly identified with the Arthurian tradition.\(^\text{36}\) This is not surprising when one remembers that the chief chronicler of Crecy and Poitiers was Froissart, and the historians of Agincourt were Hall and Holinshed, while Shakespeare, it will be seen, following Hall, portrays the reign of Henry VI as the disastrous result of the lack of these patriotic chivalric virtues in the nobility.

In 1546, one year before Henry VIII's death, Arthur Kelton wrote:

\[
\ldots \text{we Arthur most worthyest of all}
\]

\[
\text{Ought to remember, in our fantasy}
\]

\[
\text{Passying all other, in deeds marciall}
\]

\[
\text{Like Mars himselfe, shining in glory}
\]

\[
\text{In his triumphes, conquest and victory}
\]

\[
\text{As the story of him doth recounte}
\]

\[
\text{All other kinges in his tyme did surmount.}\(^\text{37}\)
\]

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### The Cult of Elizabeth—Visual Manifestations

Elizabeth, as did her grandfather and father, went to great lengths to establish her links with Arthur, commissioning genealogies to show herself his direct descendant, thus becoming, as stated in Powel's 1584 edition of the *Historie of Cambria* (attributed to Caradoc of Llancarfan) "by lineall descent ... the right inheritrice of the Principalitie of Wales."\(^\text{38}\)

Jean Wilson places the development of a true Cult of Elizabeth in the early 1570s:

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\(^{36}\)Ferguson, 98, 224.

\(^{37}\)Millican, 32.

[With] the defeat of the Northern rebellion . . . Elizabeth's government was not a caretaker waiting for her husband or her son to take over, but a regime in its own right, with its own character. After 1569 rebellions gave way to plots, and after 1569 the pressing need for Elizabeth to marry became less and less loudly expressed. It is as if in the early 1570s her subjects suddenly saw Elizabeth clearly and saw her whole, and so could begin to find an imagery in which to express that vision.39

This "imagery" was essentially Arthurian, as seen in its medieval garb of the chivalric knight; by emulating those who led the English at Poitiers, as it were, one was in turn emulating Arthur, the seminal military hero of the British race. Jean Wilson notes that in Elizabethan times, "the fact that Arthur was visualized, probably due to the influence of Malory, as living in an idealized high-gothic setting (as he still is) encouraged the incorporation of the returned-Arthur element into Elizabethan pastoral and the identification of the golden age with the age of Arthur."40

Winstanley gives three reasons for the Elizabeth's fostering of this perception of Arthur:

The causes were not in the main either poetical or historical, but political . . .

(1) The claim that they inherited the blood of the ancient British line and were the prophesied restorers of the Arthurian empire was used to support the House of Tudor upon the English throne.

(2) The claim that Great Britain had been in the Arthurian days an Empire co-equal and coeval with that of Rome was employed as a weapon against the papacy.

(3) The claim that the Arthurian empire had included the whole circuit of the British Isles—England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—was used as a foundation for the sixteenth century plan of an all-British unity.41

One means by which Elizabeth could cultivate the image of her


40Jean Wilson, 25.

41Winstanley, 59.
Arthurian ancestry was glorifying the Order of the Garter, of which she was head. As Yates notes,

[Elizabeth's] position as head of the Order, which, with its Arthurian associations, had been made a vehicle for the glorification of the national monarchy established by the Tudors, was a very important aspect of her legend. Garter festivals and processions were a prominent feature of the public life of her times.42

That many Elizabethans enthusiastically accepted the glorification of chivalry in its visual aspect can be seen most clearly in the phenomenon of the Accession Day Tilts, which are of particular relevance to this study in that they involved the simulation of armored combat. Although the death of Henry II of France at a tilt in 1559 caused the sport to be banned there,43 tilting flourished in England during Elizabeth's reign, and Jean Wilson relates that the Tilts were conducted according to rules set down in Edward III's time, establishing their connection with his founding of the Order of Garter: "it is possible that the choice of Edward III's tilting regulations was made in the hope of conforming as closely as possible to the imagined standards of Arthur's court."44

Of all the Accession Day Tilts, none would have been so filled with emotion as that of 1590, the year, it should be remembered, when Henry VI was probably first performed, for this tilt marked the retirement of Sir Henry Lee as the Queen's Champion. Jean Wilson cites records showing that the Earl of Cumberland, "about to be designated Lee's successor, came into the tilt in white (the color of the new

42Yates, 109. See also Strong, 164-185.


44Jean Wilson, 28
knight . . . and accompanied by Uther Pendragon and Merlin.\textsuperscript{45}

The same 1590 Tilt is the subject of Peele's \textit{Polyhymnia}:

\begin{quote}
In armour bright and sheen fair England's knights
In honour of their peerless sovereign
High mistress of their service, thoughts, and lives,
Make to the tilt amain; and trumpets sound,
And princely coursers neigh and champ the bit:
When all, addressed for deeds of high devoir,
Press to the sacred presence of their prince.
\end{quote}

Lee is described as

\begin{quote}
. . . y-clad in coat of steel,
And plumes and pendants all as white as swan,
And spear in rest, right ready to perform
What 'longed unto the honour of the place.
\end{quote}

Peele returns to the theme of the Tilts in \textit{Anglorum Feriae}, which depicts the 1595 contests:

\begin{quote}
. . . and such they showed as were K. Arthures knights
He whilom used to feed at Camilot.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

(11. 264-65)

Descriptions of the pageantry of the Accession Day tilts are elsewhere in Elizabethan literature. There is documentary evidence that Sir Philip Sidney tilted against Sir Henry Lee on Accession Day 1581,\textsuperscript{47} and Yates notes that the Iberian Tilts in \textit{Arcadia}, also published posthumously (in its revised form) in 1590, give us a vivid idea of the Elizabethan Tilts.\textsuperscript{48} In Sidney's romance the knights joust in elaborate disguises, all in honour of the anniversary of the Queen:

\begin{quote}
. . . a lady whom fame at that time was so desirous to honour that she borrowed all men's mouths to join with the sound of her trumpet. For as her beauty hath won the prize from all women that stand in degree of comparison—for as for the two sisters of Arcadia, they are far beyond all conceit of comparison—so hath her
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45}Jean Wilson, 36.


\textsuperscript{47}Cited Jean Wilson 90, Strong 206.

\textsuperscript{48}Yates, 88.
government been such as hath been no less beautiful to men's judgements than her beauty to the eyesight.49

A tilt with knights in their elaborate, sometimes ridiculous, costumes is described in Nashe's Unfortunate Traveler (1584). The Earl of Surrey's armor

... was all intermixed with lillyes and roses, and the bases thereof bordered with nettles and weeds, signifieing stings, crosses, and overgrowing incumberances in his love; his helmet round proportioned lyke a gardners water-pot, from which seemed to issue forth smallthrids of water, like citterne strings, that not onely did moisten the lyllyes and roses, but did fructify as well the nettles and weeds ... whereby he did import thus much, that the teares issued from his brains.50

Sir Robert Carey, hoping to ingratiate himself with the Queen after his marriage, of which she disapproved, entered the Accession Day Tilt as "the forsaken knight who had vowed solitariness," perhaps in memory of Lancelot's last-minute arrival, identity unknown, to replace Sir Bors as Guinevere's champion.51 Shakespeare, of course, has a tournament in Pericles (2.2), in which six disguised knights present their shields to Thaisa before going offstage to contest the prize of her hand.

The significance of the Accession Day tilts is summarized by Roy Strong:

However excessive they now appear, there is nothing very strange in the tilts in the context of the period. They reflect accurately the thinking of the age as developed over several decades, and give

49Sir Philip Sidney, Arcadia, ed. Maurice Evans (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), 351


an interesting glimpse into what one can only describe as neo-
medievalism, the essence of which was romance.\textsuperscript{52}

Another essentially visual, and theatrical, element of the
Arthurian ideal in Elizabethan life is the elaborate royal
entertainments, other than the Tilts, which were often presented to
Elizabeth. Millican accords them considerable importance:

Considered historically, from the very first prophecies of Arthur's
return, as a sort of epic tradition, the Arthurian right of English
kings becomes a national matter of serious import. There is no
better example of this seriousness . . . than Leicester's famous
entertainment for Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575.\textsuperscript{53}

Master of Revels George Gascoigne describes the greeting given to
Elizabeth when she arrives at the gates:

Sixe Trumpetters hugely advaunced, much exceeding the common
stature of men in this age, who had likewise huge and monstrous
Trumpettes counterfettered, wherein they seemed to sound . . . and by
this dum show it was ment, that in the daies and Reigne of K.
Arthur, Men were of the stature. So that ye Castle of Kenelworth
should seem still to be kept by Arturhs heires and their servants.
And when her majesty entered the gate, there stoode Hercules for
Porter.\textsuperscript{54}

Gascoignes account of the Entertainment reveals an amazing mix of
ancient British legend, pastoral romance, and classical mythology, vide
the abovementioned Porter Hercules, and the the Savage Man who meets
the Queen in the forest while she is hunting, and speaks to Jupiter as
someone in the distance supplies an echo. In another sequence, the
Lady of the Lake delivers a speech to Elizabeth recalling the days of
Arthur, and a mock combat, in which there was to be artillery assault
on a castle in which the Lady of the Lake was kept prisoner, was

\textsuperscript{52}Strong, 159.

\textsuperscript{53}Millican, 104.

\textsuperscript{54}George Gascoigne, The Glasse of Government, The Princely
Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle, The Steele Glas, and Other Poems and
Prose Works, ed. John W. Cunliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1910), 92.
planned, although it did not eventuate. Gascoigne was disappointed that this particular idea was discarded, for "the skirmish by night would have been both very strange and gallant."55

Another strongly chivalric allusion in these royal entertainments may be found in Sir Henry Lee's offering at his home, Ditchley, in 1592. The main character of the work is an old knight-hermit, a type who also appears in Lull's Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry,56 and, of course, Malory.

The Cult of Elizabeth--Literary Manifestations

Not only was 1590 probably the year of the first performances of Henry VI and the year of the magnificent tilt marking Lee's retirement; 1590 also saw the publication of books one to three of the Faerie Queene, the exemplar of the Arthurian ideal in Elizabethan poetry, in which, as Tillyard notes, "Spenser pictures the golden age of Elizabeth as the providential consummation of a vast process that had its beginning in the remote and fabulous past when the Trojans landed in Britain and subdued its giant-brood."57

As this theme of Arthur being the ideological as well as literal ancestor of Elizabeth is ubiquitous in the Faerie Queene, limitations of space will restrict my comments to the cantos most relevant to this discussion--book two, canto ten, in which Arthur, visiting the library of Eumnestes, finds the history of ancient Britain up to his father, Uther Pendragon, and book three, canto three, in which Merlin prophesies the Saxon invasions and the subsequent restoration of the

55Gascoigne, 91-2, 96-10, 105-6.

56Yates, 105.

57Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 38.
British (i.e. Welsh) rule by Henry VII, which is to be followed by the glorious reign of "a royall virgin":58

Thenceforth eternall union shall be made
Betweene the nations different afore,
And sacred peace shall lovingly perswade
The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
And civile arms to exercise no more:
Then shall a royall virgin raine, which shall
Stretch her white rod over the Belgicke shore
And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
That it shall make him shake, and shortly learn to fall.  
(3.3.49)

Arthur tells of his own lineage in 1.9, and, like both the real Henry VII, and, as will be discussed below, Shakespeare's Henry V, he emphasizes his Welsh origins. The home of Timon, the Faerie Knight who raised Arthur, is described:

His dwelling is low on a valley greene,
Under the foot of Rauran mossy hore,
From whence the river Dee as silver cleane
His tombling billowes rolls with gentle rore.  
(1.9.4)

The total impression one receives of the various Arthurian elements in Elizabethan life, then, is concisely described by Millican:

The more we read in the literature and life of Tudor England, the more we come to know that especially its florescence in the reign of Elizabeth was a period when Englishmen made the strongest attempt, among other things, to realize the impact of a national past on their own life and thought. Of that attempt, the obvious Arthurian ferment in connection with the Tudors is not the least significant phase.59

The chivalric flavor of this "national past" in influencing contemporary events of the greatest importance can be seen in the manifestation of the Elizabethan age which had the most pronounced effect on the course of history—the exploration, conquest, and coloni- 58Tillyard attaches importance to this stanza. He quotes it in full, Shakespeare's History Plays, 38. 
59Millican, 5.
Perfect Arte of Navigation (c. 1577) cites Arthur as an example for Elizabeth to follow in establishing her rule over distant lands—

... his Name Sene was a thorne in the Saxons eyes of those Dayes: and his name rehearsed was Odible to their ears whose ancestors were by that Brytish Arthur 12 tymes overcome in Battayle

---and Sir William Segar, Elizabeth's Garter King of Arms (1602), compares Ulysses, Aeneas, and Hector to the crusading Richard I, who in turn is compared to explorers and navigators including Drake and Frobisher.

I will conclude this admittedly cursory discussion of the Cult of Elizabeth by referring once again to the Faerie Queene, a work which Hardin Craig considers "the finest and most general personal ideal of the Renaissance, the ideal of Castiglione in the Courtier and the ideal of Sidney's life." Spenser states the aim of his epic in the dedication to Sir Walter Raleigh:

The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline ... I chose the historye of King Arthur, as most fitte for the excellency of his person.

Spenser goes on to elaborate upon his purposes with a credo explaining his use of history which reflects upon Shakespeare's artistic aims in dramatizing history in his chronicle plays:

For the Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discoures of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the


actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the thinges forpaste, and divining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.

Was Shakespeare, then, a "poet historical," or historiographer? I will attempt to show that his depiction of Henry IV's wars with the Percies, the Hundred Years' War, and the Wars of the Roses would indicate that he was both. In his recent book Shakespeare's History, Graham Holderness offers a persuasive argument that the two tetralogies are "chronicles of feudalism: they offer empirical reconstruction and theoretical analysis of a social formulation firmly located in the past, and distinctly separated from the contemporary world." For "entirely arbitrary" reasons, Holderness concentrates on the second tetralogy to demonstrate his perception of the plays as "conscious and deliberate acts of historiography," portraying "a society visibly different in fundamental ways from the society of the late sixteenth century." He does this, in large part, by examining the Bolingbroke-Mowbray challenge to trial by battle in Richard II, while it is my intention to show that the swordfighting scenes in every chronicle play in which they appear are an equally efficacious demonstration of the genuinely medieval world Shakespeare depicts.

PART TWO

THE PLAYS
CHAPTER V

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING—1 HENRY VI

Having discussed the general style of stage swordfighting in the Shakespearean era, its presence (or lack thereof) in Elizabethan drama before 1590, and arms and armor of the Shakespearean actor, and having introduced the topic of the neo-medievalist perspective of Shakespeare's chronicle plays, it is now appropriate to move on to the plays themselves. As was done in the consideration of pre-Shakespearean drama, discussion will be organized by type of swordfight, rather than by examining every fight, regardless of its nature, in each play, before proceeding to the next. As military swordfighting is by far the most prevalent in the chronicle plays, investigation will begin there, taking the plays in what has generally been accepted as their order of composition.¹

Just as reading a description of a sporting event, even if well written, can only be, at best, a poor substitute for one's presence, ¹ Henry VI, with its remarkable amount of exciting physical action, can only be fully appreciated by witnessing a well-acted performance. Indeed, the fact that so much of the play's quality is dependent upon

¹Although most commentators consider King John to be later than Richard II, there is enough doubt about the date of King John to allow my placement of the play after Richard III and before Richard II, thereby facilitating discussion of each tetralogy as a unit.
skillful presentation of the sort of stage action which Elizabethan actors would have managed brilliantly, but later actors have found extremely difficult, is one of the reasons why this play has had to endure, for the most part, a low critical reputation, so low at some points that it was not considered possible that the play could have been Shakespeare's.

The virtues of the action-filled 1 Henry VI are well described by Emrys Jones:

One of the most striking features of 1 Henry VI is the prevalence of action, the high frequency of staged incident. The opening scene is static . . . in the second scene the action moves to Orleans, and at once a change is felt. The scenes that comprise the Orleans sequence are intensely animated. The dialogue is of course still important: there is a wide range of tone, from Talbot's formally 'heroic' account of his captivity to undercutting cynical repartee. And yet these scenes are rounded out with a surprising number of sharply defined actions, some of them involving considerably detailed stage business. At times indeed the actions give rise to a quality approaching mime. Readers of this part of the play can easily overlook this dimension of closely imitated military activity. But scrutiny of the text proves that much was expected of the actors—and by implication, of the audience. Those on stage as well as those watching them are to be engaged in a corporate act of the imagination.2

It has been argued that the number of military swordfights involving principal characters in extant Elizabethan drama before Shakespeare is three: two in Greene's Alphonsus, and one in Peele's The Battle of Alcazar. In the first act of what is probably Shakespeare's first play, there are at least four such fights, and there are three more by the play's end. The military action in acts one and two of 1 Henry VI gives a comprehensive, albeit chronologically unhistorical, picture of the siege of Orleans, and in it, Shakespeare embarks on his theme of dissension within the English nobility, and how it is responsible for the loss of the English holdings in France and for the

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death of the legendary hero, Lord Talbot.

The Siege of Orleans

After the "static" but tense opening scene of Henry V's funeral, which contains a litany of the English losses in France in the early years of Henry VI's reign, we have the impressive and (literally) colorful entrance of the French, fresh from their recent successes as related in 1.1, and now approaching Orleans in an endeavor to raise the English siege:

Sound a flourish. Enter Charles, Alanson, and Reignier, marching with Drum and Soldiers.

(1.2.0.SD)

After twenty-one lines of remarking upon the fact that Talbot is in captivity and "mad-brain'd" Salisbury is left in command, the French decide on an immediate attack on the English positions near Orleans, from which they are maintaining their siege. The French exit, and then there is the following stage direction:

Here alarum; they are beaten back by the English with great loss. Enter Charles, Alanson, and Reignier.

(1.2.22.SD)

This stage direction might be assumed to be the first indicating a fight in all of Shakespeare. Jones feels that "the terse stage

3It is easy to be confused by the military situation here, since Shakespeare's chronology, as C.B. Harrison says, is "wild." Orleans is pronounced "lost" by the First Messenger at 1.1.61, and the Third Messenger describes Salisbury's weak and ill-supplied position outside the city, from where he is attempting to regain it by mounting a siege. The French, in 2.1, are hoping to drive the English away from these positions. The "turret" upon which Salisbury stands when he is killed in 1.4 is, with historical accuracy, in the suburbs. Unless otherwise indicated, events such as the siege of Orleans are described according to their depiction in the play, and not according to the Shakespeare's sources or, where the sources are considered to be incorrect, the opinion of modern historians. Of course, where Shakespeare does depart from the chronicles when presenting a military swordfight, the discrepancy will be discussed. Harrison's comment is in Harrison, ed., Shakespeare: Complete Works, 106.
direction, clearly authorial, leaves it to the actors to work out exactly how it was done, but something in the way of a skirmish, and possibly a protracted one, must have been planned in rehearsal."\(^4\)

Exactly how would the actors have chosen to "work out" this first swordfight? The direction calls for an "alarum," a term which all scholars agree refers to battle sounds. In this instance, it could include drums, trumpets, and most significantly, the sound of cannon—the importance of establishing the French use of artillery is discussed below. For the present, the point should be made that the firing of a cannon inside an enclosed theatre, even one with no roof, makes a frightening amount of noise, and therefore establishes the convention of a pitched battle with considerable force. Modern readers, and unfortunately, modern theatre directors, sometimes assume that the offstage "alarums" indicating battle would be made only with brass, drums, and a lot of shouting. This would have been as ridiculous in the Elizabethan theatre as it is, all too frequently, in our own. Even recorded sound effects are a poor substitute for the firing of some real charges, although it makes theatre managers, and their insurers, very nervous, vide the burning of the Globe in 1613.

After this noisy beginning, the French must be "beaten back, with great loss, by the English." It may be assumed that the French re-enter through the door from which they left, and that the English enter from the opposite side of the stage. Exactly who does the fighting? Viewing the stage direction in isolation may give the impression that the nobles remain offstage and that footsoldiers, played by apprentices and hired men, are the only combatants, but the dialogue both before and after the fight shows that it is far more likely Shakespeare had

\(^4\)Jones, 150.
his principal characters fight here, as they clearly must elsewhere in the play. Before the combat, the Dauphin boastfully commits himself to leading the charge:

Him I forgive my death that killeth me,  
When he sees me go back one foot or fly.  

(1.2.20-21)

Immediately after the engagement, he complains that he was left alone, surrounded by his enemies, and that flight was a necessity. It is possible, of course, that this is all a sham, and that the "weak" Dauphin spends the battle hiding somewhere, but this would be inconsistent, I believe, with the character as Shakespeare develops him in this play. One of the problems with the French scenes in 1 Henry VI for the modern reader (or actor) is the popularity of Shaw's Saint Joan, which is, if anything, even more unhistorical than 1 Henry VI. In that play, the Dauphin is seen as the weakest of characters, the type of person who would never fight. Shakespeare's portrait, although unsympathetic in some respects, shows the Dauphin as someone who is at least prepared to risk himself in battle: in 1.4 Talbot "driveth" him offstage in pursuit—this is not the same as chasing someone who is running away. Most importantly, it is the Dauphin who prevents the mutilation of Talbot's body at 4.7.49-50, and he does so honorably.

Along with the references to the Dauphin's personal combat in the dialogue, albeit by himself in self-justification, there is Reignier's mention of Salisbury's reckless courage, and the worthy participation of the other English lords:

Salisbury is a desperate homicide,  
He fighteth as one weary of his life,  
The other lords, like lions wanting food,  
Do rush upon us as their hungry prey.  

(1.2.25-28)

These "other lords" could include Sir William Glansdale and Sir Thomas Gargrave, who are with Salisbury when he first enters to speak in 1.4.
Perhaps it is necessary that a likely objection to the view that
the French and English commanders do fight be rebutted: "if we see it,
why does Shakespeare need describe it?" First, given the good points
of the Dauphin's character mentioned above, he is boastful, and
Shakespeare may intend there be comic value in the difference between
the actual fight and the Dauphin's description of it. Also, this
represents the first appearance of Salisbury, an important and heroic
color, and Shakespeare would wish to identify the "desperate
homicide" the audience has just seen.

The passage in Hall upon which, in the opinion of Bullough,
Shakespeare bases this swordfighting sequence, has at least one
commander, the Bastard of Orleans, actively involved:

This courageous Bastard, after the siege had thre wekes ful, issued
out of the gate of the bridge, and fought with the Englishemen, but
they received him with so fierce and terrible strokes, that he was
with all his company compelled to retire and flie backe into the
citee.5

Finally, there is the point, perhaps too obvious to be made, that
Shakespeare would have had no reason to exclude the principal
characters from this sequence; it would have appeared incongruous to do
so. If anything, as has been argued, the standard convention of the
Elizabethan theatre up to that point was to avoid onstage fighting
altogether; there are no indications that the normal practice was to
have the principal actors retire offstage and let the supernumeraries
do the fighting.

How many individual combats could the Elizabethan stage
comfortably contain? It is not known for certain which playhouse saw

5I have accepted Bullough's view that the chief source of Henry VI
is Hall—"until recently editors underestimated (Shakespeare's)
attention to authorities and assumed that he depended almost entirely
on Holinshed. These days are now past." Bullough, 3:1-41, 3:55.
the first Shakespearean performances, and even if evidence existed that they were at the Rose, or the Theatre, no specification for these playhouses survives. Theatre historians have attempted to establish what the size of the early Elizabethan stage might have been, using chiefly the Swan drawing and the Hope and Fortune contracts, the latter specifying a stage forty-three feet by twenty-seven feet, six inches. Richard Hosley, in persuasively arguing that the Swan’s frame had an overall diameter of ninety-five feet, notes that a playhouse of these dimensions would have accommodated a stage approximately equal to that of the Fortune’s, which is in turn very close to the stage of the Guthrie Theatre at Minneapolis or the Loretto Hilton Center at Webster Groves, Missouri.6 Having directed battle sequences on stages of similar dimensions, I would adjudge the Theatre or the Globe able to contain at least five or six bouts simultaneously.

This first Shakespearean swordfight is therefore seen as involving both English and French knights and infantry, all actors wearing, as discussed previously, relatively light Elizabethan armor, possibly made more medieval in appearance by the use of a gown or tunic, infantry fighting with sword and buckler or small target, and the knights fighting with sword and target or bastard-sword. Its specific features would have included some reckless bravery in the fighting of Salisbury, with the action, basically, being the French and English entering at opposite doors and the English driving the French to the door from which they entered. It is also likely that the English are outnumbered by the French, as Alençon, albeit with obvious hyperbole, says:

One to ten!
Lean, raw-bon'd rascals...

(1.2.34-35)

It should be noted that on the Elizabethan thrust stage, with the audience on three sides, this action would have a swirling, circular effect for the spectator, while picturing the action as here described on a proscenium stage renders it somewhat comic—enter, run across the stage, be driven back, exit—as the audience moves its heads as if at a tennis match.7

The next swordfight in 1 Henry VI follows closely on to the one just discussed--Joan challenges the Dauphin to single combat in order to prove her mettle. As this is not, strictly speaking, a military fight, i.e. part of a battle, attention to it will be given later. The brawl at the Tower of London between Gloucester's and Winchester's men (1.3) is also non-military in nature, and will also be discussed below.

So far, the location of the action has alternated between London and Orleans, and 1.4 continues the alternation with the depiction of the death of Salisbury, taken directly from Hall, at the hands of a "boy gunner" who aims his cannon at the "turret" on which Salisbury stands outside the city. As Talbot and his soldiers are about to remove the bodies, they find they must hurriedly prepare for battle:

... the French have gather'd head.
The Dolphin, with one Joan de Pucelle join'd,
A holy prophetess new risen up,
Is come with great power to raise the siege.

(1.4.100-03)

Following the English exit, there is another clear, and probably authorial, stage direction for a swordfight:

Here an alarum again, and Talbot pursueth the Dolphin, and driveth him. Then enter Joan De Pucelle, driving Englishmen before her. Then enter Talbot.

(1.5.OSD)

7See Addison, 14.
In this sequence, then, there is a fight not unlike the first, in which principal characters participate. Talbot is seen fighting for the first time, as he drives the Dauphin back, and then Joan participates in her first military combat, as she "drives Englishmen before her." Certainly, Joan taking on more than one English soldier is the stuff of exciting theatre, if well-staged.

After only three lines by the immediately re-entering Talbot, Joan returns to the stage to face him in single combat, the stage direction preceding 1.5.9 saying only "here they fight." Their having done so, Talbot has a four-line rest, after which Joan scorns to continue and enters Orleans:

TAL. Heavens, can you suffer hell so to prevail?  
My breast I'll burst with straining of my courage,  
And from my shoulders crack my arms asunder,  
But I will chastise this high-minded strumpet.

They fight again.

PUC. Talbot, farewell, thy hour is not yet come.  
I must go victual Orleance forthwith.

A short alarum: then enter the town with soldiers.

O'ertake me if thou canst, I scorn thy strength.  
Go, go, cheer up thy hungry-starved men . . .

(1.5.9-16)

This is an encounter which, according to Dessen, is better choreographed symbolically in the modern theatre, "for how does one choreograph a stage fight between a chivalric superhero and a mere slip of a girl?" Although Dessen says his comment is about modern, rather than Elizabethan, theatrical practice, after describing the effectiveness of a surrealistic, witchcraft-afflicted fight for Talbot and Joan, he goes on to say that "such suggestions run counter to the verisimilar assumptions of most critics, editors, and directors."8 In bringing

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8Dessen, Elizabethan Stage Conventions, 113,114. See also above, 18-19.
critics and editors into the argument, Dessen is clearly leaving the confines of the modern theatre and implying that symbolic staging might have been employed for this fight in the Elizabethan theatre.

Two points need to be made here. First, Joan's fencing requirements make it unlikely that she was played by a very young boy, as the standard thirty-six-inch sword, no less the longer bastard-sword, would have been too heavy for a child to use; Shakespeare makes this point himself in Richard III when Richard refuses to give his sword to the young Prince Edward, saying "it is too heavy for your Grace to wear" (3.1.120). For a fit lad in his teens, however, this physical requirement of the part would be manageable. This idea ties in well with Baldwin's "line" casting: he assigns the part to Nicholas Tooley, who would have been about fifteen in 1590, an apprentice actor, while Talbot is assigned to Richard Burbage himself, a reasonable assumption if the date of 1 Henry VI is indeed 1590--Andrew Gurr notes that the amalgamated company drawn from the Admiral's and Strange's Men was at the Theatre in 1590-91, as was Pembroke's company, and Burbage appears to have worked with both.9 Second, while it may be assumed that Burbage, if he did play Talbot, was an excellent fencer, given the demanding fencing roles he is known to have taken, we don't know how his physique might have compared with that of Tooley or other boy actors.

Information from the text regarding Talbot's appearance is in the scene (2,3) involving his temporary capture by the Countess of Auvergne:

9Gurr, Shakespearean Stage, 34-38.
Is this the Talbot, so much fear'd abroad
That with his name the mothers still their babes?
I see report is fabulous and false.
I thought I should have seen some Hercules,
A second Hector, for his grim aspect
And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs.
Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf!
It cannot be this weak and writhed shrimp
Should strike such terror to his enemies.

(2.3.16-24)

Later, Talbot good-humoredly explains to the Countess that his real size and strength is in his brave company:

These are his substance, sinews, arms, and strength,
From which he yoketh your rebellious necks ...

(2.3.63-64).

Although the Countess is clearly exaggerating, the scene still provides a picture of the older, grizzled warrior who is, in physique, not "a second Hector"--Cairncross makes the interesting point that the Countess' calling Talbot a "writheled shrimp" (2.3.22) is an indication that Burbage played Talbot, since Burbage is known to have taken the part of "writheled shrimp" Richard III.10 Whatever the identity of the actors, Talbot's combats with Joan, performed by an actor portraying an older, although still fit, man, against a presumably fit fifteen- or sixteen-year-old boy, would not have presented any unusual problems in achieving verisimilar staging in 1590.

In the modern theatre, as Dessen correctly points out, where Joan is played by a young woman, having her wield a standard thirty-six inch or longer bastard-sword convincingly would be difficult, unless the

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10 Cairncross, ed., 1 Henry VI, 45, citing an article in Notes & Queries 12 (1885):50. It is impossible to get any idea of Talbot's age from 1 Henry VI, since his death in 1453 is brought forward about twenty-two years, to occur before the death of Joan. See also F.A. Marshall, "Talbot, First Earl of Shrewsbury," letter to Notes and Queries 12 (Nov. 1885): 408; R.C. Bostock, "Talbot, First Earl of Shrewsbury," letter to Notes and Queries 12 (Nov. 1885): 502; Florence Compton, "Talbot, First Earl of Shrewsbury," letter to Notes and Queries 12 (Nov. 1885): 502.
actress in question were particularly strong. Today, then, it makes sense to "play up" the supernatural aspect of the engagement, and let Joan use her witchcraft to render Talbot ineffective against her.

Admittedly, this could have been done in 1590, although the absence of any specific direction to indicate this, in a play which has unusually specific stage directions regarding both combat and witchcraft (5.3), leads to an assumption that the fight would have been a more straightforward one.

The placement of the stage directions between 1.5.8 and 1.5.15 in F deserves careful scrutiny, for this is the first instance of a Shakespearean innovation—single combat in battle which is interspersed with dialogue, possibly including dialogue simultaneous with fighting. Jean MacIntyre notes the innovative nature of the fighting in 1 Henry VI in that "a series of battles takes place at Orleans, all of which break the fighting by alternating action and brief speeches." While this view is correct it does not go far enough, for in some instances it is possible the action and speeches are not alternating, but simultaneous.

The stage direction following Talbot's four-line speech in the middle of the fight, (1.5.9-12), reads "here they fight again," the "again" indicating that there is indeed a pause while Talbot speaks, but Joan's lines which follow could be more effective during the resumed combat, and not during another pause. Joan has obviously gotten the better of Talbot as she bids him "farewell" and prepares to leave the stage, but it is unlikely she has him completely at her mercy only to choose not to finish him off; such a momentous event would hardly be accompanied only by a terse "thy hour is not yet come." It also does not quite fit Joan's invitation to "o'ertake me if thou canst"

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11 MacIntyre, 37.
The more appropriate action in this fight would be one of Joan toying with the obviously nonplussed, but not incapacitated, Talbot.

Her exit direction at 1.5.15—"a short alarum: then enter the town with soldiers"—is an excellent example of the inability of any stage direction, no matter where placed, to give a truly adequate representation of what an audience would see and hear in the theatre, for the linear representation of the printed word does not allow for two simultaneous events; even if they are set out in parallel columns they cannot be read at the same time.\(^\text{12}\) In this instance, the stage direction is better understood as what the actors do while speaking; Joan's farewell is spoken while she has Talbot at a disadvantage, but decides not to press the matter, her main objective being to "enter the town with [her] soldiers." The rest of her speech is given as she is disengaging herself from the fight with Talbot and making her way to the exit:

\begin{verbatim}
O'ertake me if thou canst, I scorn thy strength.
Go, go, cheer up they hungry-starved men;
Help Salisbury to make his testament:
This day is ours, as many more shall be.
\end{verbatim}

\[(1.5.15-18)\]

The Joan-Talbot engagement is not the end of this particular combat sequence, as after a fourteen-line speech by Talbot, the stage direction reads "Alarum. Here another skirmish" (1.5.33.SD). In this instance it is likely that the English assault the door through which

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\(^{12}\)E.A.J. Honigmann, in a 1976 essay, discusses the placing of stage directions on the printed page, noting that modern editors often "improve" the text by moving them slightly from F or Q positions—"where a single, sudden action is concerned it would be useful to indicate the precise moment for it." "Sudden" actions, though, still may take a few seconds to complete, so even the most careful placing of a stage direction does not allow a reader to see what a spectator sees and hears simultaneously. See Honigmann, "Re-Enter the Stage Direction," *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976): 118.

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Joan and the French soldiers have exited, are met there by the French, and are repulsed after sword and shield fighting, as Talbot gives the command: "It will not be. Retire into your trenches . . ." (1.5.33).

This could be another example of the simultaneity of swordfighting and speech. While it makes sense for Talbot to say "it will not be" during a respite after an unsuccessful assault, then giving the command to "retire," an equally valid reading of the lines would be to have them shouted out as a command in the midst of a furious fight. The action would be one of "strategic withdrawal"; in most forms of fencing, as in boxing, one can assume a purely defensive posture and safely extricate oneself from a fight, although in tournament fencing and boxing, of course, one does not have unlimited space in which to retreat.

The combats of 1.5, then, represents two innovations in stagecraft within the first act of Shakespeare's first play: the alternation of swordplay and dialogue, as noted by MacIntyre, and their even more exciting simultaneity. It is important to note that this entire representation of combat is the invention of Shakespeare in contradiction to the story as it is told by Hall: Shakespeare has Joan arriving with supplies—"I must go victual Orleance forthwith" (1.5.14)—and Talbot opposes her. Hall has Alençon arriving to relieve the city and Talbot giving him free passage, in order to put greater strain on French provisions with Orleans:

... delayng no tyme nor deferryng no space [Alencon] came with all his armie within two leagues of the citee, and sent woorde to the [French] captaines, that on the next morowe they should be redy to receiue them. Whiche thynge, the nexte daie they accomplished, for the Englishemen thought it to be muche to their availe, if so great a multituind enterred into the citee, vexed with famyne & replenished with scarseness.13

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This ends the swordfighting part of Shakespeare's depiction of the siege of Orleans. In 2.1 the English make a successful night assault, obviously to the tiring-house gallery "with scaling-ladders" (2.1.8.SD), but there is no swordfighting called for, as "the French leap o'er the walls in their shirts" (2.1.39.SD).

The Capture of Rouen

The next military combat in 1 Henry VI is in act three: the French capture Rouen by masquerading as farmers, only to have the city re-taken by the English. Most of this is Shakespeare's invention; Bullough notes that the French trick is taken from Hall's description of the capture of Cornill by the English in 1441, while the un-historical death of Bedford as he watches the English assault from a litter is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the death of Uther Pendragon.14

Actual hostilities commence after Joan has entered the city and signalled to her compatriots with a torch that it is safe for them to do likewise (3.2.26). The Bastard, the Dauphin, and Reignier exit (i.e. "enter" Rouen), and F shows "Alarum. Talbot in an excursion" (3.2.36.SD). If this stage direction is authorial, it is Shakespeare's first use of the term "excursion," but the lesser degree of specificity in comparison to the stage directions in acts one and two casts doubt on its authorial nature. In this instance, it probably does not call for swordfighting, and the "excursion" occurs as the term is customarily defined, a running across the stage, with previous comments about sound effects and the more effective staging possible on the Elizabethan thrust stage being kept in mind. The fighting has taken

14Bullough, 3:69, 79. The death of Bedford is an important element in the development of the play's theme, and is discussed below.
place (offstage) inside the city, and the English are forced, thanks to
the French "treachery" (3.2.37), to withdraw.

Talbot's five-line condemnation of the French, spoken as he enters
the stage "from" the city (3.2.36-40), and his exit by another door,
are followed immediately by another action:

An alarum. Excursions. Bedford brought in sick in a chair. Enter
Talbot and Burgundy without; within, Pucelle, Charles, Bastard, and
Reignier, on the walls.

(3.2.41.SD)

In this sequence Shakespeare shows the remainder of the English
forces being expelled from Rouen; therefore Bedford being brought "in"
is actually "out" of the city. The excursions accompanying this action
would represent these others being driven out. They would be joined
onstage by Talbot and Burgundy, who enter from elsewhere. The English
then vow to retake the city while Bedford watches the fight from his
chair, like "stout Pendragon" (3.2.95).

Of all the military sequences in 1 Henry VI, this is the most
difficult to work out as to what may have actually happened on Shake-
speare's stage. So far, Shakespeare has been totally consistent in
establishing his exact locale, and the text makes it clear that the
tiring house itself is to be the walls of Orleans or Rouen, with the
gallery serving as the ramparts from which, as in this scene, the
holders of the city may parley with their opponents. What Talbot and
the English must do then, in order to "set upon" (3.2.103) the enemy,
is to represent a scaling or breaching of the walls (with Bedford there
the entire time). Yet there is no mention of scaling ladders as there
is at 2.1, although the French have refused the challenge to fight in
the open field.

The stage directions do not clarify the action. After the exit of
the English and Burgundians, leaving Bedford, the stage direction reads
"An alarum. Excursions. Enter [Sir John Fastolfe] and a Captain" (3.2.104.SD).

Although it is impossible to be certain, it would appear that the action would have been clearest and most theatrically interesting if the "excursion" were to represent the English assaulting whichever stage door, or area, stands for the gates of Rouen, and that somehow the convention of a breach in the walls is established, perhaps by a bursting open of the stage doors. The English would then exit through this "breach," and shortly afterwards, the noise continuing, Fastolfe could enter the stage area from the same location, along with the Captain and other English who have been, as the text indicates, repelled. There is a six-line exchange with the Captain, who deplores Fastolfe's cowardice, and then more military action:


BED. Now, quiet soul, depart when heaven please,
For I have seen our enemies' overthrow.
(3.2.110-11)

This "retreat" most probably calls for a re-organizing of the English "line;" then it, minus Fastolfe, but including Talbot and Burgundy, could make another run at the "breach," thereby executing the

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15Although F, and most modern editions, show Falstaff[e], I believe Harrison and Kittredge are correct in adopting the name Fastolf[e], as it appears in Hall. Without denying that Shakespeare takes some of the real Fastolfe in creating the character in Henry IV, originally named after Sir John Oldcastle, this earlier version of the famous fat knight is a very different character. Modern audiences gain nothing but confusion if a director retains Shakespeare's use of the name. Of course, there is the (unprovable) possibility that the F version of Henry VI, the only one extant, is a late revision, and the sequence involving Falstaff/Fastolfe was added later, to capitalize on the celebrity, or notoriety, of a famous character. This could also account for some of the staging difficulties in this particular military action.

16See below, 349-50, for discussion of "gates" on the Shakespearean stage.
excursions indicated in the stage direction, and then exit "into" the city. The French flight in the stage direction is therefore after the English victory offstage, which they follow with an appearance in triumph on the same walls occupied only moments ago by the French.

Although is has been stated previously that in 1 Henry VI the fighting is onstage whenever possible, this is one incident where showing onstage combat would create an obvious incongruity, as (a) Bedford cannot change location, and (b) the French have refused Talbot's challenge to fight in the field. Some commentators argue that in Shakespeare, especially with plays having many changes of location, such as these histories and Antony and Cleopatra, logicality of locale does not matter, and everything is simply "on the stage." Although this view has much to recommend it, particularly if it dissuades modern directors from using painted scenery or elaborate stage properties to "set the scene," it is clear that in this play Shakespeare is very consistent in maintaining the integrity of each locale, even when "splitting" the stage and having the tiring-house gallery represent the top of the city walls, and the main stage the area outside.

Bordeaux

The next sequence of the Hundred Years' War in 1 Henry VI is the death of Talbot at Bordeaux--brought forward by Shakespeare many years--a heroic death, which, as Bullough notes, "is caused by Somerset's malicious passivity." Shakespeare prepares for Talbot's climactic encounter with the French in four tense scenes, all of approximately fifty lines, or, by rough estimation, two and a half minutes each. In 4.2 Talbot approaches Bordeaux and demands the city's

17Bullough, 3:66.
submission. From the walls, the French General informs Talbot that he is, in fact, surrounded by the French, as the Dauphin is approaching with a large force. Within the city,

Ten thousand French have ta'en the sacrament
To rive their dangerous artillery
Upon no Christian soul but English Talbot.

(T.2.28-30)

Talbot hears the Dauphin's drum, and, outnumbered as he is, exits to prepare to fight.

Before allowing the fight to proceed, Shakespeare adds more tension by including the two scenes (4.3 and 4.4) in which Lucy desperately appeals first to York and then to Somerset to aid Talbot, each blaming the other for not being able to help. From Lucy's despair the scene returns to Bordeaux, as Talbot, to no avail, tries to convince his son to flee. The action then goes directly to the battle:

Alarum; excursions, wherein Talbot's son is hemmed about, and Talbot rescues him.

TAL. Saint George and victory! fight, soldiers, fight!
The Regent hath with Talbot broke his word,
And left us to the rage of France his sword.
Where is John Talbot? Pause and take thy breath;
I gave thee life, and rescued thee from death.

(4.6.1-5)

This is another clear stage direction instructing the actors to do some very exciting fighting with sword and target or bastard-sword. Although it might appear at first reading that Talbot's exhortation is after the rescue, it is more likely, given the "where is John Talbot" at 4.6.4, that Shakespeare is again asking his actors to speak while

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18 P.A. Jorgenson argues that the Elizabethan audience would be able to distinguish between the various drum cadences used in military drills of the time, and therefore Talbot's reference to the Dauphin's drum has more specificity to it than would appear at first glance. P.A. Jorgenson, Shakespeare's Military World, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 26-31.

19 This episode follows Hall closely. Bullough, 3:73.
engaged in heavy fighting: Talbot is shouting encouragement to his soldiers, and the fact that he actually has to ask where his son is, even as he rescues him, is an indication of the intensity of the fight. There is nothing in Kyd, Marlowe, Peele, or Greene that approaches incidents such as the fights below the walls of Orleans or on the fields of Bordeaux for this combination of dramatic dialogue and spectacular action.

After the exchange between Talbot and his son, this scene being the same approximate length as the tense pre-battle scenes, the Talbots exit to renew the fight, in which they are both to be killed. F shows "Alarum. Excursions. Enter Talbot led" (4.7.0SD).

It is interesting to speculate as to why, after four acts of violent onstage action displaying the heroic character of Talbot, which is amplified by his son's valor, Shakespeare would have written the play to have the death of Young Talbot offstage, and have Talbot die by means other than a fatal sword-stroke while fighting.

The first point which needs to be made is one of strong disagreement with the bracketed addition given to the stage direction in the 1891-3 Cambridge, and most modern, editions: "Alarum. Excursions. Enter Talbot led [by a servant]" (4.7.0SD). He is led by his (French) captors, not a servant. That he has been captured is clear:

Triumphant Death, smeared with captivity,
Young Talbot's valor makes me smile at thee.

(4.7.3-4)

Although a "servant" tells Talbot that his son's body is being brought on to the stage, it makes no sense to have the two enter alone, as then Talbot would not have been captured. It must be French soldiers who carry in the body of Young Talbot; as there is no mention of what they do upon the subsequent entrance of the French command it may be assumed that they remain. The extras who portray the English soldiers must be
kept in reserve to "attend" Lucy when he enters at 4.7.51, and there would have to be enough of them to remove two bodies with dignity.

The answer is that if Talbot is to die while fighting then he would be denied an impressive in extremis speech; the interminable declamatory speech delivered after a fatal blow belongs to the style of Kyd and Peele, and Shakespeare avoids it in all of his plays.

Nothing could achieve as much pathos as the scene as Shakespeare has constructed it: the exhausted, and possibly wounded, Talbot is led on in captivity, glorying in the courage of his son, but this elation is destroyed, after sixteen lines, by the arrival of Young Talbot's body. Talbot's remaining speech, at the end of which he dies, is exactly the same length, followed by the entrance of the French command, Talbot lying there with his son in his arms.

The completion of military swordfighting in 1 Henry VI has yet to arrive, for Talbot's death in act four is followed by only one London scene (5.1) of sixty-two lines before the action returns to France and the wars; 5.2 in Anjou, just before the fight, is only another

20In The Battle of Alcazar, Stukley has a fifty line speech after receiving a fatal stab wound (11. 1455-1504).

21It is not clear whether Talbot's death is caused by a wound or sheer exhaustion and despair. In Hall, the event, while no discredit to Talbot, is anything but the heroic demise needed for the play:

But his enemies havyng a greater company of men, & more abundaunce of ordinaunce then before had been sene in a battayle, fyrst shot him through the thye with a handgonne, and slew his horse, & cowardly killed him, lyenge on the ground, whom they never durst loke in the face, whyle he strode on his fete, and with him, there dyed manfully his sonne the Lord Lisle (Bullough, 3:73).

A further discouragement to an historical portrayal of Talbot's death might have been the London stage's fatal accident with firearms about four years previous to 1 Henry VI (see above, 42). Talbot's "soldiers adieu" (4.7.31) is either addressed to fellow captives, or, more likely, to his troops in absentia.
twenty-one lines. It is clear why Shakespeare chose to transfer the
time and location of Joan's capture—actually many years before the
death of Talbot, and at Compiègne: by having it at Angiers, in Anjou,
his establishes the irony of the departure of one female French threat
to English stability, Joan, being followed immediately by the arrival
of another, Margaret.

Hostilities commence with the opening stage direction of 5.3, an
action that would entail either some infantry swordfighting or merely
some moving about the stage accompanied by much noise. The excursions
are not purely at random, however, as it is necessary to show that the
English have the upper hand:

Alarum. Excursions. Enter Joan De Pucelle.

PUC. The Regent conquers and the Frenchmen fly.
Now help, ye charming spells . . .

(5.3.1-2)

Joan's appeal in vain to her spirits for help, and her exit, are
followed by more combat between principal characters, although there is
some disagreement amongst editors as to the participants. The sequence
in F is:


YORK. Damsel of France, I think I have you fast.

(5.2.30)

Cairncross notes that "there is obviously some discrepancy between
Joan's exit and the absence of a re-entry." He cites C.F. Tucker
Brooke in the opinion that "modern editors make the fight take place
between Joan and York, but without justification. Joan's power has now
disappeared and her part is passive. Probably the exit . . . after
line 29 should be omitted, leaving Joan a spectator of the fight which
follows.\textsuperscript{22}

I believe that Brooke is correct, although not entirely: there is no real discrepancy between Joan's exit and her reappearance to be captured, as she could easily re-enter in the excursions called for in the stage direction. While having Joan remain "a spectator" would be justified in a modern production, there is insufficient cause to assume that such happened in the original staging; that point aside, it makes excellent sense for York to fight with Burgundy, a most unsympathetic character owing to his defection to the French. If York drives Burgundy to the exit, through which he and the other French flee, then York can turn about to discover and seize a powerless Joan, perhaps disarming her with one sharp blow of his sword. In a modern production, the placement of the actors could be arranged to make the capture of Joan as identical as possible, for reasons given above, to the capture of Margaret, which takes place only fifteen lines later:

Alarum. Enter Suffolk, with Margaret in his hand.

SUF. Be what thou wilt, thou art my prisoner.

(5.3.45)

With the York-Burgundy fight, the fourth battle sequence in which principal characters fight onstage, the military swordplay in \textit{1 Henry VI} is concluded.

Thematic Significance

If this great amount of stage swordfighting, and so far only the fighting within battle scenes has been discussed, existed as an end in itself, then the play would be, as Morgann said, merely an awful "drum and trumpet thing." When the play is seen, however, as any play must be—as an integral whole as performed—these scenes of military

\textsuperscript{22}Cairncross, ed. \textit{1 Henry VI}, 113-14.
swordplay become an important element in what is now being recognised as a poetic creation of high excellence. As Michael Goldman observes, "the sweep of athletic bodies across the stage is used in 1 Henry VI not only to provide an exciting spectacle but to focus and clarify, to render dramatic, the entire unwieldy chronicle."24

In reading Nashe's famous tribute to 1 Henry VI, and this discussion to this point, one might infer that the play is only about Talbot. In fact, the Talbot sequences, depicting the loss of the English possessions in France, relate cohesively to scenes involving intense rivalries within the English nobility, as its members work to gain or maintain control over the child king:

'Tis much, when sceptres are in children's hands;
But more when envy breeds unkind division:
There comes ruin, there begins confusion.

(4.1.192-4)

These two themes join two thirds of the way through the play. As Henry and Talbot meet in Paris (3.4), there is bickering between Basset, who is a supporter of Somerset, and Vernon, who wears the white rose of York. In 4.1 (a continuation of the same scene, really) Henry is crowned, Fastolfe is degraded, and, in his attempt to end the quarrel between Vernon and Basset, Henry seals his own fate by foolishly putting on a red rose, prompting York to say the words quoted immediately above.

It is this same quarrel of the red and white roses which brings about the death of Talbot, as it leads to the inability, on York's part, and unwillingness, on Somerset's, to come to his aid. In a

23 Cited Cairncross, ed. 1 Henry VI, xxxviii.


25 See below, 145-46.
sense, Talbot's is the first death of the Wars of the Roses: before England can fall into the absolute savagery of 2 and 3 Henry VI and Richard III, England's last hope (before Richmond) must be removed.

A simple breakdown of the line allocation in 1 Henry VI offers an insight into its construction. Of the play's 2672 lines, 239 are devoted to the aforementioned scene(s) in which the English court is in Paris. Of the 2433 remaining, 902 are in England and deal, in various ways, with the dissension there, and 1531 are in France, showing England's decline in the Hundred Years' War, a decline, Shakespeare is careful to bring out, which is caused by this very dissension. No wonder, then, that Nashe, who probably saw the play performed, considered it in a sense to be Talbot's play—indeed, about two thirds of it is.

The point is not that Talbot is on stage for two thirds of the play, but that two thirds of it deal primarily with his fortunes. Cairncross, in arguing against this being a "Talbot play," notes that he dies at the end of act four, and that he appears in thirteen of twenty-seven scenes. Cairncross' view is less than persuasive: the number of scenes means little without reference to their comparative lengths, and other characters in Shakespeare who may be described beyond doubt as being the most important spend considerable time off-stage: Lear is in eleven of twenty-six scenes. Cairncross is correct in reminding us that it is not all Talbot's play, but he is simply wrong in stating that the Talbot scenes may be eliminated, as they were in the extensively cut television version on the BBC's "Age of Kings" (1960), and have the play "retain a highly unified and developing theme, a design."26 It might, but the play is not 1 Henry VI; remove

26 Cairncross, ed. 1 Henry VI, xli.
all the scenes with Lear and his daughters, and one is left with a highly unified one-act play about Gloucester and his sons.

Given that the military sequences in France represent the major portion of the play's content, we must therefore ask how the theme of the play, as stated above, is elucidated by them. I believe that in Shakespeare's perspective, to use the term employed by Strong in describing the Accession Day tilts, and discussed in the preceding chapter, is "neo-medievalist," and that this perspective can be seen with particular clarity in the swordfighting sequences, where Talbot, in a manner well out of proportion to his importance in Hall, becomes, as Riggs notes, "the last of the great medieval chevaliers and a faithful mirror of the Elizabethan aristocracy as it liked to imagine itself ... horrified by the use of artillery, he epitomizes the feudal noblesse d'épee, envisioning every battle as a beau geste and a chance to fulfil a vow made on behalf of his fallen peers and his personal honour."28

That the character of Talbot was seen in Elizabethan times as being a character not only in an exciting play, but as one in a patriotic epic, is given credibility by a reading of the sentences in Pierce Penniless which lead to the mention of Talbot, sentences which show a marked similarity to Caxton's preface to Malory, and his epilogue to Lull:

First, for the subject of them [i.e. plays]: for the most part it is borrowed out of our English chronicles, wherein our forefathers' valiant acts, that have lien long buried in rusty brass and wormeaten books, are revived, and they themselves raised from the grave of oblivion and brought up to plead their ancient honours in open presence, than which what can be a sharper reproof to these degenerate effeminate days of ours? How would it have joyed brave

27See above, 108-09.

28Riggs, 22.
Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new-embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least, at several times, who in the tragedian that represents his person imagine that they behold him fresh bleeding!29

Presented on the stage by actors who, it has been argued, wore armor covered by colorful gowns bearing heraldic insignia, and who were skilled at fencing, thereby combining spectacular and realistic action with dramatic dialogue which the Elizabethan audience found, and audiences today can find, emotionally stirring, the impression gained from the swordfighting in 1 Henry VI would be one of England's heroic past reborn in a manner that the Accession Day tilts, with their satiric speeches30 and over-decorated armor, and the royal entertainments, which were not unified dramatic works, could not approach. The swordfighting of Shakespeare's plays is a visual image of the Elizabethan age, and as Strong notes, "the visual image of the age was feudal and medieval."31

This neo-medieval, chivalric quality of 1 Henry VI is inherent in other parts of the play which have received only cursory attention so far. The first of these occurs before the play is one minute old: Gloucester's tribute to Henry V concentrates on Henry as conqueror:

Virtue he had, deserving to command;  
His brandish'd sword did blind men with his beams;  
His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings ...  

(1.1.9-11)

29Nashe, 1:212. I do not believe Talbot is any less the hero, as David S. Kastan claims, because his "heroic example obviously is not sufficient to move his contemporaries to noble action." The value of Talbot lies in his example to the audience, not other characters in the play, as Kastan himself implies by referring to Nashe in the next sentence. David S. Kastan, Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1982), 21.

30Strong, 141.

31Strong, 185.
Everyone is familiar with the association of the dragon with the tradition of St. George; Strong describes how this tradition, tied as it was to the Catholic church, was nevertheless strongly encouraged by the Tudors, noting that "St. George remained untouched on the accession of Elizabeth."32 Bedford's elegy also has an inescapable allusion to Arthur as the son of Uther Pendragon—according to Geoffrey of Monmouth it was Uther who, in recalling Merlin's interpretation of a comet's tail in the shape of a dragon, had

... two dragons fashioned of gold, in likeness of the one which he had seen in the ray which shone from that star. As soon as the Dragons had been completed—this was with the most marvellous craftsmanship—he made a present of one to the congregation that he could carry it round to his wars. From that moment onwards he was called Uther Pendragon.33

In the following scene, after the English victory in the play's first skirmish, Shakespeare makes a second chivalric allusion, beyond the allusion inherent in the skirmish itself, as Alençon remarks upon the quality of the English soldiers:

Froissard, a countryman of ours, records
England all Olivers and Rowlands bred
During the time Edward the Third did reign. (1.2.29-31)

Within these three lines there are three distinct medieval references. First is the mention of Froissart, the chronicler who, it has been noted, was the chief source of chivalric inspiration to the Elizabethan age.34 Second, the English are compared to the greatest heroes of French chivalric romance. Third, any mention of the reign of Edward III, which saw the establishment of the Order of the Garter, would be

32Strong, 182


34See above, 99-100.
imbued with chivalric associations for an Elizabethan audience.

The death of Salisbury in 1.4 is also worthy of more discussion. Accurately drawn from Hall, the episode shows Salisbury killed not in battle, but by a sneak cannon shot. Although artillery was used heavily by both sides at Orleans and other battles of the period, Shakespeare never gives any indication that the English use it; as Riggs observes, they behave as if it doesn't exist. Nor will the French "take up arms like gentlemen" (3.2.70) and fight in the field; instead they taunt the English from the city walls.

A challenge such as is given in 3.2 to those occupying a besieged town, demanding they leave it and fight in the field, is not merely the stuff of romance. Even as late as the fifteenth century, as Keen notes, the strict laws of war applying to sieges were observed, and whether to withstand a siege from within or leave the town and fight was a decision going far beyond a simple question of which method was more likely to succeed:

In contemporary eyes there was a great difference between the conquest of a town by force of arms, and a victory in the field. To accept a challenge of battle was to accept the judgement of God; it was also to accept one's adversary as of approximately equal standing to oneself. To refuse the summons of a prince who claimed a town as of right was quite another thing; it was an insult to his majesty and punishable as such ... In the open field of battle there was no stigma attached to surrender, and the law of arms protected the life of a Christian captive who had given his faith to an enemy. At a siege there were no such safeguards, either for the life or honour of the besieged.

The extent to which the chivalric code was actually followed in this

35 Bullough, 3:55.


period is a difficult but intriguing question, and will be taken up in some detail in discussion of the second tetralogy. For the moment, it should be noted that although \textit{1 Henry VI} is "unhistorical" in terms of its chronology, this is an example of the "conscious historiography"\textsuperscript{38} of Shakespeare in the chronicle plays: a medieval war is presented as fought according to medieval custom.

Not only do the English scorn artillery where Hall has them make use of it, but there are, in comparison with \textit{Richard III} (5.3.339), no orders given to bowmen, who were, of course, omnipresent throughout warfare of the period. One might gain the impression, as is the case when reading Froissart, that there were virtually no common soldiers fighting in the Hundred Years' War, except when their contribution is made explicit to emphasize the modesty of the commander, \textit{vide} the Countess of Auvergne scene (2.3).

To portray the death of Bedford, Shakespeare repeats the technique of alluding to a chronicle of English heroism: the episode is taken directly from something Bedford "read" about the death of Pendragon in Geoffrey of Monmouth:

\begin{center}
... once I read
That stout Pendragon in his litter sick
Came to the field and vanquished his foes.
\end{center}

\textit{(3.2.94-6)}

The temporary of Talbot by the Countess of Auvergne (2.3) has already been discussed in relation to what it reveals of the physique of the actor playing Talbot; it must now be examined in another context. In his 1977 essay, James A. Riddell explains how Talbot's behavior towards the Countess, his "generosity of spirit and his indifference to petty insult," is consistent with that of a "hero

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\textsuperscript{38}See above, 112-13.
of the battlefield." There is also much of chivalric romance to this scene; the enchanting lady's "capture" of the knight is common in the works of Malory and the Gawain poet, with his "dear ladies, who with their wanton wiles have thus waylaid their knight."39

Talbot's encounter with the Countess also reveals an important quality in his character not as apparent elsewhere in the play, which is his modesty, shown as he cheerfully advises the countess that his real strength lies not in his own prowess, but in his loyal soldiers:

How say you, madam? Are you now persuaded
That Talbot is but shadow of himself?
These are his substance, sinews, arms, and strength . . .

(2.3.61-63)

Castiglione includes this quality of modesty as an essential requirement of the Courtier:

He therefore that we seeke for, where the enemies are, shall shew him selfe most fierce, bitter, and evermore with the first. In everie place beside, lowly, sober, circumspect, fleeing above all things, bragging and unshamefull praysing himselfe.40

A key episode which infuses 1 Henry VI with an Arthurian quality, as seen in a medieval milieu, is the degradation of Fastolfe (4.1), for it is the most explicit reference to be found in 1 Henry VI to the Order of the Garter, which began, as has been noted, with Edward III and existed in Elizabethan times with the Queen as its head. Talbot's angry denunciation of Fastolfe shows a marked similarity to the

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nostalgic exhortations of Caxton previously discussed: after tearing
the garter from the "craven's leg" (4.1.15), Talbot recalls the past
glories of the Order:

When first this Order was ordain'd, my lords,
Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death, nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.
He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight . . .

(4.1.33-40)

The death of young John Talbot is also relevant to this neo-
chivalric theme. In his first scene (4.5), as has been noted, he
refuses to flee from the scene of battle contrary to his father's
insistence. Then, in 4.6, he fights at Talbot's side, and, according to
the elder Talbot, distinguishes himself:

When from the Dolphin's crest thy sword struck fire,
It warm'd thy father's heart with bold desire
Of bold-fac'd victory.

(4.6.10-12)

Like Prince Hal at Shrewsbury, he is wounded in his maiden encounter:

The ireful Bastard Orleance, that drew blood
From thee, my boy, and had the maidenhood
Of thy first fight, I soon encountered . . .

(4.6.16-18)

This appears to mark Young Talbot's entry into the order of chivalry,
as once again he is asked to leave the field:

Wilt thou yet leave the battle, boy, and fly,
Now thou art sealed the son of chivalry?

(4.6.28-29)

After Young Talbot's predictable refusal and the renewal of the
fighting, Talbot's next entrance with dialogue is the abovementioned
one of being "led" by one of his French captors. His entering words
are those of praise for his son's valor:

Where is my other life? mine own is gone.
O, where's young Talbot? where is valiant John?
Triumphant death, smear'd with captivity,  
Young Talbot's valor makes me smile at thee.  
(4.7.1-4)

When his son's body is carried in, his parting words, like those of Siward's in Macbeth (5.7.47-50) are those of pride mixed with grief:

Poor boy, he smiles, methinks, as who should say,  
Had Death been French, then Death had died today.  
(4.7.27-28)

The comfort to be found in Young Talbot's dying bravely rests firmly in the code of chivalry, as courage was set down in all chivalric treatises as the sine qua non of the knight. Lull asserts that the knight must have, above all, courage, "for charity abideth not so agreeably in no place is in noblesse of courage," and Keen remarks upon the emphasis chivalry placed on personal bravery by noting that "gross cowardice was notionally punishable by death." That this was a sentiment to which many Elizabethans adhered is evident from Essex's comment in letter to the Privy Council written when going off to fight in Ireland: "I provided for this service a breastplate and not a cuirass; that is, I am armed on the breast but not on the back." 41

Shakespeare's final allusion to the code of chivalry in characterizing Talbot is Lucy's florid request for Talbot's body, in a passage which has aroused some controversy regarding its source. 42

Where is that great Alcides of the field,  
Valiant Lord Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury,  
Created, for his rare success in arms,  
Great Earl of Washford, Waterford, and Valence,  
Lord Talbot of Goodrig and Urchinfield,  
Lord Strange of Blackmere, Lord Verdun of Alton,  
Lord Cromwell of Wingfield, Lord Furnival of Sheffield,  
The thrice victorious Lord of Falconbridge,  
Knight of the noble Order of St. George,

41 Keen, Chivalry, 10, 175; Black, 370, Cf. Macbeth 5.8.47: "Had he his hurts before?"

42 See Cairncross, ed., 1 Henry VI, 106.
Worthy Saint Michael and the Golden Fleece. 
Great Marshall to Henry the Sixth 
Of all his wars within the realm of France?

(4.7, 60-71)

Nothing could be more chivalric than the mention of Alcides. As has been noted, the ultimate source of the code of chivalry was seen to be not the Arthurian legend, but the ancient legends of Greece and Troy.43 In moving from Alcides to not only the Order of St. George, but the French Order of St. Michael and the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece, Lucy identifies Talbot with the entire history of the chivalric tradition.

According to Sir William Segar, the Burgundian and French orders were both established during the time of England's Henry VI: the Golden Fleece in 1429 by Philip the Good, and St. Michel by Louis XI in 1469.44 Emperor Charles V can be seen wearing the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece in the famous Titian portrait;45 with his triumphant entry into London in 1522, he proved a strong inspiration to his nephew Henry VIII for the concept of an imperial Tudor monarchy, and it should also be remembered that Charles was also host to Castiglione as the Italian revised the Courtier.46

This noble legacy, in dramatic terms, dies along with Talbot in Henry VI. The heroism of Salisbury, Bedford, Gloucester, and Young and Old Talbot, all now gone due to the dissension of the English nobility,
is to be replaced, as will seen in 2 and 3 Henry VI, with a savage disregard of chivalry in the consequent horrors of civil war.

It is fitting that this discussion of 1 Henry VI close with examination of a speech which contains one of the play's many classical allusions. It is generally accepted that veneration of the classics goes to the heart of humanism, but in reminding us of its place in chivalric tradition, Shakespeare shows himself to be in accord with the very real Elizabethan accommodation, as explicated in Curtis Brown Watson's Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor, of these two seemingly disparate sets of ideals.47 That this was a particularly important feature in Elizabethan visual imagery is shown by Frances Yates, in her explication of the famous Sienese "Sieve" portrait of Elizabeth:

In this portrait one can realize how the Elizabeth cult used every ingredient of the Elizabethan Renaissance. It used the Renaissance in its literary sense, the revived classical learning, the techniques of classical allusion, invigorated, as in the Italian Renaissance, by the imperial idea . . . It used all this in the service of the reformation idea, turning the allusions toward the concept of imperial reform and the spread of a reformed empire. This included the idea of the British empire, of the descent through Brut from the Trojan imperial line, of the renovatio of this empire in the Tudor imperial ruler, an empire of purified religion in Europe and a destiny of expansion towards the West, beyond the seas into the New World.48

In summary, the view of 1 Henry VI presented here is that Shakespeare wishes to establish a powerful thematic connection between the story of Talbot and the neo-medieval Cult of Elizabeth. Therefore, in the staging of the many swordfghting sequences, he would have Talbot armored to resemble a medieval knight, and have him fight in the manner of Malory's heroes, with sword and target or with bastard-sword,


48Yates, 116.
consequently succeeding in portraying this theme with great, although ephemeral, theatrical power. Furthermore, in every military sequence, Shakespeare has created opportunities for the other English and French characters to evoke images of the Arthuriad by allowing for similar fighting, even where his sources do not have such engagements occurring.

In his first dramatic work, then, Shakespeare enriches a poetic evocation of an heroic past by combining two previously unrelated traditions: the power of English dramatic verse is brought together for the first time with a full exploitation of the playhouse's already existent tradition of spectacular swordsmanship. The result is a play which was an enormous popular success in 1590,\(^4^9\) giving credibility to Yates' observation that to the Elizabethans, "though feudalism as a working social structure was extinct, its forms were still the vehicle of living emotions."\(^5^0\) No less than the Elizabethans are modern audiences to be enthralled by a fine performance of \textit{1 Henry VI}.


\(^5^0\)Yates, 108.
CHAPTER VI

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING—2 AND 3 HENRY VI

Of the three Henry VI plays, the second has the least amount of swordfighting, but, with the Cade rebellion and the First Battle of St. Albans, it is the first extant Elizabethan play which shows an English civil war by means of onstage combat. 2 Henry VI is also an interesting case in that there is a reported text, The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous houses of York and Lancaster, with the Death of the Good Duke Humphrey,1 which contains many indications, albeit not to be accepted without question, of what the original stage business of 2 Henry VI might have been.

Emrys Jones notes that 2 Henry VI is a less military play than 1 Henry VI: "its prime concern is government."2 While this is undoubtedly true, it is also true that the play shows a government in a state of collapse, the symptoms of this collapse being first the Cade revolt, prompted by York, and then the first battle (1 St. Albans) of the Wars of the Roses, with its "shame and confusion" (5.2.31) of civil

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1Hereafter called the Contention. Quotations are from the full text as printed in Michael J.B. Allen and Kenneth Muir, ed., Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 75-116. As there are no scene/line numbers, references will be by page number, verso or recto.

2Jones, 161.
war. Both of these military sequences, in which there is much individual combat between principal characters, are meant to be seen in sharp contrast to the chivalrous and heroic, if doomed, efforts of the English expeditionary force in 1 Henry VI, and this contrast has been, and can be, brought sharply into focus by the manner in which the fighting is conducted when the play was and is performed.

2 Henry VI--The Cade Revolt

Bullough notes that the popular motivation behind the Cade rebellion is not very explicit in Hall, and that Shakespeare, in "elaborating his [Cade's] aims . . . drew on Holinshed's or Grafton's account of the Peasants Revolt of 1381." Further to Bullough's point, Shakespeare also makes it clear that Cade has been suborned by York. However, in terms of the actual portrayal on stage, rather than the motivations for this Kentish revolt, Shakespeare appears to have relied on Hall completely, and, as he did with 1 Henry VI, he purposely altered some of Hall's account in creating a unified dramatic work.

The first fight in the play occurs in 4.3, when the Cade mob kills Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother. The Staffords are unlike the mob's previous victims, for they are the leaders of an organised army which is attempting, at Blackheath, to quell the revolt, and they are killed while fighting in what might be considered a battle, as seen in F: "Alarums to the fight, wherein both the Staffords are slaine. Enter Cade and the rest" (4.3.0SD).

While Hall does not give details of this "skyrmish," as he calls it, he does introduce Stafford as "Syr Humphrey Stafford, Knyght," describing him and his brother as "valeaunt," and he shows Cade's army,

3Bullough, 3:96.
up to this point, to be well-disciplined. In contrast, Shakespeare, as Bullough notes, "makes them a rabble."  

In this initial fight, Shakespeare invites comparison with the fighting of 1 Henry VI. Stafford, like Talbot, is a valiant knight, and, like Talbot, he brings a relative to die alongside him. The pre-battle parley, (4.2.122-81) is a cruel mockery of that conducted by Talbot at Bordeaux (1H6. 4.2), and the taking of Sir Humphrey's armor is also a mockery of a chivalric, even Homeric, tradition. In showing this contrast, he clearly shows the extent of the decline in England's fortunes since we last saw combat. Talbot, at least, is killed fighting a foreign enemy; Stafford is killed by a mob—"the bodies shall be dragged at my horse heels till I do come to London" (4.3.12-13)—and it is fair to assume that the event would have been presented on stage in a manner to put this point across as graphically as possible.

Cade himself might wear a sword—he uses it later against Iden—but he also has a staff: "Enter Jack Cade and the rest, and strikes his staff on London Stone" (4.6.OSD). Some of Cade's followers might also have swords, as implied by the first words spoken by a Cade rebel being Bevis' "Come and get thee a sword, though made of a lath: they have been up these two days" (4.2.1).  

The Contention however, at the same point, indicates that the reporter who presumably acted in 2 Henry VI remembers pikes and staffs:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{Bullough, 3:114, 3:96.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{Perhaps he takes Stafford's sword as well as his helmet and armor, in 4.3.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\text{Cairncross feels there is a definite reference to the lath (wooden) sword of Vice in the Morality plays. Cairncross, ed., 2 Henry VI, 109.}\]
Enter two of the rebels with long staves.

GEORGE. Come away Nick, and put a long staffe in thy pike, and provide thy selfe, for I Can tell thee, they have bene up this two daies.

Enter Jack Cade, Dicke, Butcher, Robin, Will, Tom, Harry and the rest, with long staves.7

Allowing that the Staffords enter "with drum and soldiers," and Cade's mob would probably be as heavily populated as the number of apprentices and hired men in the company would allow--

Drumme. Enter Cade, Dick Butcher, Smith the Weaver, and a Sawyer, with infinite numbers.8

--this fight would be a wild mêlée, and given the indications in the Contention, it is the first Shakespearean example of the staff against the sword, a variety of swordplay which appears later in King Lear and Cymbeline. Another ironic contrast here is afforded as well: the Staffords do not, literally speaking, die "by the sword," whereas Young Talbot, contrary to Hall, does.

The technique of fighting with the staff is well described by George Silver in his Paradoxes of Defence; he considers it to be the match of any weapon.9 The death of the Staffords could then be grisly indeed. Overwhelmed by superior numbers and stunned by the blow of a

7 Allen and Muir, ed., 65 r. It has not been conclusively shown who was responsible for the reported texts of 2 and 3 Henry VI, although, as Scott McMillin has noted, scholars are in general agreement with the proposition that it was an actor or actors of Pembroke's men, and that the Contention "is so closely related to the True Tragedy that it must have the same provenance." Since "the search for individual actors responsible for these texts has fallen short of convincing results," the reporter of each text is referred to simply "the reporter," without any judgement as to how many people were involved. Scott McMillin, "Casting for Pembroke's Men: The Henry VI Quartos and The Taming of a Shrew," Shakespeare Quarterly 23 (1972): 144.

8 As in F.

9 Silver, Paradoxes, 38-44; see also Swetnam, 134-54.
staff, they would be finished off, as would normally be the case, with a dagger, or, if the director were to desire the death to be as brutal as it could possibly be, with a mallet, war hammer, or other blunt instrument, although this is more difficult to do on a thrust-stage, as "masking" the simulated blows from the entire audience can appear overly contrived.

From this fight, the scene of battle switches to London itself, as F shows:

Alarums. Matthew Goffe is slain, and all the rest. Then enter Jacke Cade, with his Company.

(4.7.0SD)

This is an important sequence, which is the same in the Contention as in F. First, as Roger Warren notes, Goffe was a famous commander, and Hall describes the savage hand-to-hand fighting around London Bridge, during which many houses were burned, in great detail; casualties, including women and children, were high. With all this in mind, it might be imagined that for the slaying of Goffe "and all the rest," Shakespeare envisions, to quote Hall, a "hard and sore conflict."¹⁰

A note as to how the modern director may best stage this fight might be useful. Although Shakespeare does not mention the time of day, Hall describes it as a night battle, and with modern theatrical lighting, this combat, with its clash of weapons in the dim light, along with the ensuing murder of Lord Say in the same scene, could be presented as a most horrifying action. This would effectively bring out the importance of the scene; as Jones observes, it, along with the earlier scenes in which the opponents of Cade are killed, represents

the "climax of the theme of the shattering of the commonwealth."

Cade and Iden

Although Cade's fight with Iden (4.10) is not, strictly speaking, a military fight, i.e. not part of a battle between opposing armies, I will include it here as it is very much a part of the overall rebellion. This gives some justification to the fact that Iden carries a sword while walking in the relative security of his own garden, giving the impression that some ragtag skirmishing is still going on, and that Iden is brave even to venture outside his house. As Cade has commanded a large army in open rebellion, he is essentially a war fugitive, and his death, in this sense, might be seen as the final skirmish.

Cade would most probably fight with a single sword in this scene. It seems illogical that he would carry a shield, if he ever had one, over a five-day flight; indeed, as a fugitive he would certainly discard evidence of his rebellious activities, although he still has Sir Humphrey's "sallet" (helmet) with him to use for collecting drinking water (4.10.8). A country-squire type like Iden, meanwhile, could make good two-handed use of the bastard-sword.

Iden makes an interesting reference to a truncheon (a staff about the length of a modern police baton) in this scene: "thy stick a leg compared with this truncheon" (4.10.49). If he does indeed carry a truncheon as well as a sword, he could then use the truncheon for defense with the left hand, much as a dagger is used in rapier-and-dagger fencing. As it would appear unusual, however, that a man would

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11Jones, 169.

12In the Contention, Iden enters the scene with "his men" and sends them off for weapons. The discrepancy is a minor one.
be so heavily armed in his own garden, I believe a more logical explanation, given the locale of the scene, is that this is Shakespeare's one use of "truncheon" in its rarer horticultural meaning of a length cut from a plant, which OED cites as early as 1572. Iden would then use only a standard or bastard-sword.

F has no stage direction for the actual fight; the Contention reads "here they fight, and Cade falls downe." As Iden pays tribute to his sword after discovering his opponent's identity--"sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed" (4.10.67)—one might speculate that the fight would barely have begun before the weakened Cade (4.10.60-63) is felled by one strong blow from Iden's weapon.

2 Henry VI—The First Battle of St. Albans

The end of the Cade fighting would have offered little rest for the apprentices and hired men who portrayed his mob, as Iden's exit is followed by York's entrance in open rebellion: "Enter York and his army of Irish, with Drum and Colors (5.1.0SD)." The First Battle of St. Albans does not actually commence until after 5.1, a long scene (217 lines), packed with incident, is completed, but as 5.1 has some material which holds implications for the manner in which the fight scenes would be enacted, a brief look is required.

For reasons which will be given below, it is important to note that Somerset arrests York on a charge of capital treason (5.1.106-07), and that the word "traitor" or "treason" is spoken in the scene nine

13 Allen and Muir, ed., 70 r.

14 Stage direction as in F. Shakespeare's portrayal of the Wars of the Roses starts off on a chronologically unhistoric note: York's army is Irish. Actually, York raised an army in Wales well after his return from Ireland (Bullough, 3:119).

15 See below, 159-61.
times. Also of importance is Shakespeare's inclusion of York's sons, Edward and Richard, who, in reality, were both small children when St. Albans was fought. The character of Richard, whose fame need not be explained here, will show its early development almost exclusively in the context of his fighting, and Shakespeare is also able to establish personal hatreds amongst the principal characters by deciding, without reference to Hall, who is to fight whom, leading directly to such dramatic events in 3 Henry VI as the death of Rutland, and that of York in the scene which Greene purposely misquoted. This antagonism—it is clearly personal, not only political—is most evident in Clifford's vituperative denunciation of the young Richard as a

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots & \text{foul indigested lump,} \\
& \text{As crooked in thy manners as thy shape!}
\end{align*}
\]

(5.1.156-57)

This is seconded by Young Clifford shortly afterwards, who refers to Richard as a "foul stigmatic" (5.1.216).16

These violent insults given and received, and the inclusion of York's sons established, Shakespeare then commences with his extraordinary depiction of the Wars of the Roses, and the First Battle of St. Albans.

Enter Warwick.17

WAR. Clifford of Cumberland, 'tis Warwick calls! (5.2.1)

Warwick's challenge to Clifford is interrupted after only seven lines by the entrance of York, and Shakespeare uses this entrance to draw attention to the fact that York and the other nobles are fighting on foot; therefore this stage combat does not in any way serve as metaphor

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16See Saccio, 455.

17As in F. The Contention indicates alarums.
for combat on horseback. In so doing, Shakespeare is historically accurate—as has been shown, knights normally did dismount to fight at this time—and is emphasizing the falling off of chivalric tradition; the very word chivalry is equestrian, and Malory's knights always engage first on horseback. Talbot, of course, fights on foot in *Henry VI*, but no comment upon it is offered, while here:

> WAR. How now, my noble lord? what, all afoot?

> YOR. The deadly-handed Clifford slew my steed . . . (5.2.8-9)

Seconds later, Clifford makes his entrance, and we have the first personal combat of the battle. York, here behaving as the "valeant lord" Hall considers him to be, 18 refuses to let Warwick risk himself against Clifford, and sends him off to seek out "some other chase" (5.2.14). Next is the pre-swordfight personal challenge, as seen in *Henry VI* but nowhere else in Elizabethan drama up to this time, and its exact nature should be noted:

> CLIF. What seest thou in me, York? Why dost thou pause?

> YORK. With thy brave bearing I should be in love, but that thou art so fast mine enemy.

> CLIF. Nor should thy prowess want praise and esteem but that 'tis shown ignobly, and in treason. (5.2.19-23)

Clifford's charge of treason, coupled with the emphasis on treason and "traitor" in 5.1, makes Clifford's challenge a challenge to mortal combat. To understand this point we must refer to the laws of war regarding capture and ransom, laws which were indeed kept during the late medieval period, for they served as one of the main economic justifications for war, and many knights went off to fight simply as a business undertaking. Barbara Tuchman notes that after Poitiers, the

18Bullough, 3:178.
number of French nobles captured was too great for them all to be taken back to England, and so "most were released on a pledge to bring their ransoms to Bordeaux before Christmas,"19 and in 1 Henry VI, when the capture of Talbot is announced, Bedford's immediate response is an offer to pay the entire ransom himself (1.1.148), although his generosity proves to be unnecessary, as Talbot is released in an exchange (1.4.27-29). In general, it might be said that in the middle ages there were compelling reasons not to kill one's enemy in battle if he was a member of the nobility, as shown by a comment in Ghillebert de Lannoy's Enseignements Paternels (c. 1435): "[In war] one can honorably enrich oneself."20

Once a charge of treason was levelled, however, a combat was fought under different circumstances, for such a charge was tantamount to an appeal before the High Court of Chivalry, as occurs with Bolingbroke and Mowbray in Richard II, and fighting would then be to the death. As Malcolm Vale notes, the mortal combat of the Wars of the Roses was the exception rather than the rule in the late medieval period:

The more savage episodes of the Wars of the Roses were merely strict applications of the laws of treason. [At this time] ruthlessness of war to the death had remained exceptional, reserved for such rebels and traitors.21

That Shakespeare was aware of this distinction is evident in 1 Henry IV, with Henry IV's outright refusal to ransom Mortimer:

19 Tuchman, 151.


Shall our coffers then
Be emptied to redeem a traitor home?
Shall we buy treason? and indent with fears,
When they have lost and forfeited themselves?  

(1.3.85-89)

Henry is not only referring to the political impropriety of freeing a
traitor from captivity, for there is also a legal principle at work,
and the very basis of the quarrel between the King and Hotspur in 1.3
of 1 Henry IV is the disputed claim to prisoners taken by the Percies
at the Battle of Holmedon [Homildon]. There is some reason to sup-
pose, then, that when Talbot faces the Dauphin in 1 Henry VI, for
example, the staging could show that there is more interest in disable-
ment and subsequent capture than in killing the opponent, while in 2
Henry VI, the intent of the fighting has changed, one might say de-
generated, into, as Young Clifford terms it, "ruffian battle" (5.2.49).

There is no stage direction in F indicating the York-Clifford
encounter, but the Contention shows "alarms, and they fight, and Yorke
kils Clifford." As furious as I believe this fight would be, given
the challenge of treason and the wrath in the exchange of insults heard
in 5.1, E.W. Talbert is probably correct in saying that "certainly the
intensity of fury per se [will be] shown upon the battlefield, not by
the duke, but by his younger son."24

After Young Clifford discovers the body of his father and gives a
vow of vengeance which both Talbert and another commentator, Inga-Stina

22According to the laws of ransom as established during the reign
of Richard II, which, one assumes, would still be in force during the
reign of Henry IV, if a prisoner was of high rank, he should be taken
to the King, Constable, or Marshall, the king getting one ninth of the
ransom. Dillon, "Ransom," 104.

23Allen and Muir, ed., 73 r.

24E.W. Talbert, Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays:
An Essay in Historical Criticism (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1963), 207.
Ewbank, consider "Senecan," the next engagement occurs:

Enter Richard and Somerset to fight.

RICH. So, lie thou there;
For underneath an alehouse' paltry sign,
The Castle in Saint Albons, Somerset
Hath made the wizard famous in his death.
Sword, hold thy temper; heart, be wrathful still:
Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill.

Fight. Excursions. Enter King, Queen, and others.

(5.2.66-71)

There is no indication in the text as to the identity of those involved in the "fight" and "excursions" after Richard's speech, although some business is required to allow for the removal of Somerset's body. A hint is to be found in the Contention, however, as there is a stage direction which reads "Alarmes again, and then enter three or foure, bearing the Duke of Buckingham wounded to his tent." If the reporter remembered Buckingham's being wounded in this battle, it is possible that he was wounded in a fight onstage, perhaps against Warwick or Edward.

The Contention shows an interesting variation from F in this sequence; in effect, there are three individual fights in the Contention where there are only the two discussed above in F. Furthermore, the order of those two is switched. In the reported text,


26 As in F. The Contention reads "Alarmes to the battale, and then enter the Duke of Somerset and Richard fighting, and Richard kills him under the signe of the Castle in saint Albones" (Sc. XXIII, OSD). As many editors have noted, this, as is Richard's speech (5.2.66-71), is a reference to the prophecy that Somerset should "shun castles" (1.4.37). Allen and Muir, ed., 72 r.

27 Stage direction as in F.

28 Allen and Muir, ed., 74 v.
Clifford is interrupted in his body-removal by the re-entry of Richard:
"Enter Richard, and then young Clifford laies downe his father, fights
with him, and Richard flies away againe."29

While it is impossible to say conclusively what the reporter did
and did not remember correctly—Madeleine Doran speculates that he
simply forgot30—this memorial reconstruction, with its picking up the
of the body only to put it down again, strikes me as comically clumsy.
Also doubtful is Scott McMillin's analysis, which is that the insertion
of an extra fight here represents an improvement in the text, as it
gives an extra combat in the familial quarrel: "in doubling these
combats--father against father, son against son--Q adds emphasis to an
important theme of the Henry VI plays."31 While it should be obvious
by now that I strongly agree with McMillin's view that the familial
nature of this war represents an important theme of Henry VI, it does
not necessarily follow that another fight adds emphasis—Richard will
have his chance to fight with Young Clifford in 3 Henry VI, and having
them meet here only lessens the anticipatory tension leading to the
latter event. It is also totally out of character for Richard, as we
see him in the next two plays, to run away from any fight. A mass
murderer he may be, but he is also a courageous swordsman on the
battlefield.

Apart from the possibility of a reporter's mistake, what might
also have occurred is that the production of 2 Henry VI in which the
reporter was involved was one in which Shakespeare did not himself

29 Allen and Muir, ed., 73 r.

30 Madeleine Doran, "Henry VI, Parts II and III: Their Relation to
the Contention and the True Tragedy," University of Iowa Humanistic

31 McMillin, 146.
participate. In these circumstances, the actors' adding of a swordfight to give them another chance for a fencing exhibition—Young Clifford does not otherwise fight in this play—is little different from the tendency of the comedians to add to their own dialogue, the practice of which Hamlet speaks so disparagingly. As with the direct cause of Greene's "upstart crow" comment, it is impossible to tell, but interesting to guess.

As noted by David Riggs, in the York-Clifford fight the "parties respectfully place their dispute within the decorum of a chivalric trial by combat,"32 by first giving due credit to the opponent's worth as a fighter (5.2.19-27). Moments later, however, when the next generation, represented by Richard, takes the stage, there is no challenge, no formal respect whatever paid to the opponent: "Enter Richard and Somerset to fight" (5.2.66).

As brutal and ugly as the York-Clifford fight might be, then, in comparison with Talbot's fighting in 1 Henry VI, it could still show some sense of traditional combat style in its sword and target or bastard-sword fighting. Then, with Richard and Somerset, a further change should be apparent, with the savagery of the fighting accentuated even further by Richard's deformed stature.33

None of these personal combats appears in Hall; as mentioned above, Richard was a baby, and Somerset and Clifford are only listed as among the dead without details as to how they were killed. Yet, as noted by Cairncross, Hall's account of the death of Rutland has Clifford say "thy father slew mine" to the young boy. This

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32Riggs, 128.

contradiction must be accepted as simply that, unless Hall wishes Young Clifford's remark to be read in a more general sense of "your father was responsible for my father's death."\(^{34}\)

To conclude discussion of 2 Henry VI, it is proposed that in these first engagements of a civil war immediately following the gruesome fighting of the Cade revolt, Shakespeare is able to show, through the manner in which both knights and the mob use their weapons, the progressive decline of the chivalric tradition which Talbot embodied, and the development of what Cairncross correctly considers a dominating theme of 2 and 3 Henry VI, "the unnatural chaos introduced by civil war into the natural order of the family."\(^{35}\)

3 Henry VI--Wakefield

In 2 Henry VI, Shakespeare uses the combats of the civil rebellion in act four and the First Battle of St. Albans in act five to show vividly the inevitable result of the dissension within the English nobility. In 3 Henry VI this theme is developed further, as the Wars of the Roses make England a veritable "field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls" (R2. 4.1.144). As Cairncross observes, "... in 3 Henry VI chaos has come again, the jungle is loose, and the innocent are involved with the guilty in the general ruin," while Bullough, in a context apart from his study of the play's sources, notes that "the play is filled with rage and carnage, with warlike monsters smiting

\(^{34}\) This discrepancy matters little in the effort to understand Shakespeare's use of Hall in composing the combat sequences. Shakespeare would have York fight Clifford regardless of what Hall recorded. See Cairncross, ed., 2 Henry VI, 149; 3 Henry VI, 4.

\(^{35}\) 3 Henry VI, 4.
each other." 36

As with 2 Henry VI, there is a reported text, The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York (hereafter called the True Tragedy), which, like the Contention, can offer some insights into the manner in which 3 Henry VI was first staged.

In terms of military history, Shakespeare's chronology in 3 Henry VI is far more controlled than that of 1 Henry VI. Although he still, as in all his histories, turns "the accomplishment of many years into an hourglass," in acts one and two he shows the proximity and the consequences of the Battles of Wakefield and Towton (30 December 1460, and 29 March 1461) clearly, while the events of acts three and four fall within the intervening ten-year period before the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury (14 April and 4 May 1471) in act five.

The first two battle sequences contain some of the best-known moments in the Henry VI plays. The murder of Rutland (1.3) and the death of York (1.4), both taken from Hall and Holinshed, occur at Wakefield, and Henry's famous "dial speech," followed by the "son that hath killed his father" and "the father that hath killed his son," is part of the events at Towton (2.5).

The stage directions in F accompanying the Battle of Wakefield give no definite indication of onstage swordfighting, although the absence of such indication does not preclude its presence. After 1.2, which shows the Yorkists at Sandal Castle, action commences: 37


37 The True Tragedy's account is not significantly different.
YORK. Five men to twenty! Though the odds be great,
I doubt not, uncle,38 of our victory.
Many a battle have I won in France
When as the enemy has been ten to one;
Why should I not now have the like success?

Enter Rutland and his Tutor.

RUT. Ah, whither shall I fly to 'scape their hands?
Ah, tutor, look where bloody Clifford comes!

(1.3.71-1.4.2)

Michael C. Addison argues very persuasively that in this sequence
the Elizabethans would have seen some onstage combat:

Although there is no stage direction to indicate 'excursions' here,
it is nonetheless justifiable to assume that on the Elizabethan
stage the opportunity would have been taken for physical combat.
Further, a close examination of the situation at the beginning of
the next scene would seem to indicate that some extension of the
action is in fact a dramatic necessity. The Yorkists have marched
off to meet an oncoming enemy, and it is therefore necessary that
Rutland and his Tutor appear from the off-stage area thereby
established as the battlefield. For this to be possible
theatrically it would seem that there must be some intervening
battle action, to allow for a plausible length of time to be
expended on the battle itself . . . what is only implied in the
text can be made clear by action on the stage: a raging battle is
taking place that can be given theatrical representation.39

At the end of 1.3, in which Rutland is murdered by Young Clifford,
there is a textual problem, as there is no provision for the removal of
Rutland's body after Young Clifford exits, and the next scene, commencing with York's solitary entrance, must be elsewhere on the battlefield:40

CLIF. Plantagenet, I come, Plantagenet!
And this thy son's blood cleaving to my blade
Shall rust upon my weapon till thy blood,
Congeal'd with this, do make me wipe off both. Exit

38Sir John Mortimer.
39Addison, 172-73.
40Anthony Hammond's suggestion, with which I disagree, that the
stage-keepers removed all bodies from the stage, is discussed below, in
relation to the Battle of Bosworth Field, 181-83.

YORK. The Army of the Queen hath got the field ... (1.3.49-1.4.1)

Apart from the problem of Rutland's body, there is one of establishing a long enough battle for the Queen's forces to get the upper hand. While 1.3 is fifty-two lines long and can give the impression, with continuing noise, that the battle rages nearby, some sword-fighting here involving infantry, in a modern production, would help establish the high point of Lancastrian fortunes in the war, and "cover" the removal of Rutland's body by supernumeraries dressed as standard-bearers. 42

I believe it can be shown that York's capture, twenty-six lines into 2.4. would involve a swordfight. In both F and the reported text, Young Clifford is about to take York on--

I will not bandy with the word for word.
But buckle with thee blows, twice two for one. (1.4.49-50)

--but Margaret, assisted by Northumberland, stays Clifford's hand. F has no direction to indicate how or exactly when York is taken, but Clifford's "aye, aye, so strives the woodcock with the gin" would indicate that he is captured at 1.4.61, and some modern editors retain Johnson's stage direction: "they lay hands on York, who struggles."

The True Tragedy, 43 however, has the stage direction "fight and

41Addison, 173.

42The only other convenient way to stage Rutland's death on an Elizabethan stage, as far as I am aware, would be to position Rutland in the discovery space and then draw a curtain across. See below, 182-83 and 301-03.

43All quotations from the True Tragedy are taken from Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles, No. 11 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), using its act, scene, and line numbering which show parallels with F.
take him (1.4.61.SD)," an action more in keeping with Holinshed, who, according to Bullough, is the source of this episode, as Hall's account "was not sensational enough." Bullough's reasoning is sound: Hall, without including any details, only reports that York was slain, the paper crown being placed on his head after the body is discovered and the head is cut off. This is Holinshed's account too, but Holinshed adds extra details of Clifford's conversation with Margaret in presenting the head. Holinshed's version also recounts the exact nature of York's death, and describes an extended fight as York is surrounded:

But when he was in the plaine field betweene his castell; and the towne of Wakefield, he was invironed on everie side, like fish in a net, so that though he fought manfully, yet he was within halfe an hour slaine and dead.  

While the True Tragedy stage direction "fight and take him" is not as direct a reference to the chronicles as is "enter Clifford wounded, with an arrowe in his necke" (2.6.0SD), it is still closer than Johnson's stage direction, leading to the conclusion that once again "the reporter is correct," and therefore, after Queen Margaret and Northumberland restrain Young Clifford, a brief swordfight in which York is overwhelmed by superior infantry numbers should occur.

3 Henry VI-Towton

The Contention stage direction for York's capture, if accepted, represents the only swordfighting which clearly involves a principal character in the Battle of Wakefield. Towton, however, is a very

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44 Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 3:160. Amongst popular recent editions, the Pelican has the True Tragedy's "fight and take him." The New Arden, Signet, and Riverside follow Dr. Johnson.

45 Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 3:209 (emphasis added).

different case. As he does in *2 Henry VI*, Shakespeare fictitiously brings Richard, who was nine years old when Towton was fought, into the fight, and continues the familial revenge theme by having him meet with Young Clifford on the battlefield:

Excursions. Enter Richard and Clifford.47

RICH. Now, Clifford, I have singled thee alone . . . (2.4.1)

In this encounter, Shakespeare draws a clear parallel to the fight in *2 Henry VI* between the present contestants' parents. There is the brief pre-fight challenge, but unlike York and Old Clifford, who had some praise for each other, Richard and Young Clifford offer only what might be called formal invective:

RICH. Now, Clifford, I have singled thee alone:
Suppose this arm is for the Duke of York,
And this for Rutland, both bound to revenge,
Wert thou environ'd with a brazen wall.

CLIF. Now, Richard, I am with thee here alone:
This is the hand that stabbed thy father York,
And this is the hand that slew thy brother Rutland,
And here's the heart that triumphs in their death
And cheers these hands, that slew thy sire and brother,
To execute the like upon thyself--
And so have at thee!

They fight, Warwick comes. Clifford flies.48 (2.4.1-11)

It was Warwick who was about to tackle (Old) Clifford in *2 Henry VI* before York asked him to

... seek thee out some other chase,
For I myself must hunt this deer to death. (5.2.14-15)

47 As in F. The Contention reads "Alarmes, and then enter Richard at one doore and Clifford at another."

48 Clifford's flight must not be construed as cowardice, as it is only reasonable to avoid an engagement with two enemies; this matter will be taken up in greater detail with discussion of *1 Henry IV*, as it is an important factor in the characterization of Douglas.
Here, Richard says to Warwick:

\[\ldots\] single out some other chase
For I myself must hunt this wolf to death.  \[2.4.12-13\]

In a 1972 essay, Carol M. Kay considers the large amount of animal-slaughter imagery in 2 and 3 Henry VI.\(^{49}\) Although she doesn't mention this particular incident, it is evident that the replacement of the relatively noble deer image for Clifford with the far less pleasant one of a hunted wolf for his son adds emphasis to the increasing savagery of the fighting. The fight itself, before Warwick interrupts it and causes Young Clifford to flee, would also show this, with vicious blows and strokes, use of the sword hilt as a club at close quarters, and, given that there is no thought of capture and ransom, use of the dagger. This may be seen, then, in even sharper contrast than previous fights to the far more traditional and chivalrous swordsmanship of Talbot in 1 Henry VI.

In the True Tragedy, the stage direction shows an interesting variation:

ALARMES. They fight, and then enters Warwick and rescues Richard, & then exequent omnes.  \[2.4.11\]

The reporting in the Contention and the True Tragedy is certainly consistent in making Young Clifford a better fighter than Richard—as noted above, in the Contention there is a fight which does not occur in P, and it is concluded by Richard's running away.\(^{50}\) The speculations made above as to the reasons for that variation also pertain to the


\(^{50}\)See above, 162-64.
present episode--F, with its implication that Richard, "a doughty warrior," according to Bullough, "despite his deformity,"\textsuperscript{51} has the upper hand in this fight, is much more in keeping with the development of Richard's character through the three plays in which he appears. The greater the level of violence in this episode is, the greater the pathos of the action which follows in 2.5: Henry enters, wandering about the field unescorted, he delivers his "dial speech," and then "the son that hath killed his father" makes his entrance.

An interesting historical point about the Battle of Towton, which Emrys Jones notes is "traditionally the bloodiest of all the civil war battles," can give its depiction added emphasis in a modern production: it was fought in a snowstorm.\textsuperscript{52} With the expert use of modern lighting techniques to simulate snow, what is already a gruesome sequence could be made even more so.

Between Towton and Barnet/Tewkesbury there is a ten-year (two-act) break, punctuated, as far as this discussion is concerned, only by what might be a minor scuffle in 4.3 when Edward's tent is surprised and he is captured.

3 Henry VI--Barnet/Tewkesbury

Barnet and Tewkesbury are considered here as one combat sequence; in fact, the two battles were only two and a half weeks apart, and Shakespeare presents them with only one scene of eighty-two lines in between (5.4), with the call to arms at Tewkesbury commencing at 5.4.60. The main event of the Barnet portion of this sequence is the death of Warwick, and although Warwick, who is described by a

\textsuperscript{51}Bullough, \textit{Narrative and Dramatic Sources}, 3:169.

\textsuperscript{52}Jones, 183; Charles Ross, \textit{The Wars of the Roses: A Concise History} (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), 121.
contemporary chronicler as "the most courageous and manliest knight living,"\(^{53}\) dies valiantly, according to Hall, in the midst of battle:

> He beyng a man of mynde invincible, rushed into the middest of his enemies, where as he (aventured so farre from his own compagnie, to kill and sley his adversaries, that he could not be rescued) was in the middes of his enemies, striken doune and slaine.\(^{54}\)

The Kingmaker's death in *Henry VI* is portrayed in the same manner as the death of Talbot—the potential excitement of onstage combat foregone in favor of an impressive dying speech after an offstage wound:

> Lo, now my glory smeart'd in dust and blood! My parks, my walks, my manors that I had, Even now forsake me; and of all my lands Is nothing left met but my body's length. Why, what is pomp, rule, reign, but earth and dust? And live we how we can, yet die we must.\(^{55}\)

(5.2.23-28)

Of all the stage directions in *3 Henry VI* indicating military action, none bears a greater discrepancy between F and the True Tragedy than does the one describing the Battle of Tewkesbury, and again, the reporter's memory is likely to have been accurate. In F we find:


> Flourish. Enter Edward, Richard, Queen, Clarence, Oxford, Somerset.

(5.5.0SD)

The True Tragedy reads:

> Alarmes to the battell, Yorke flies, then the chambers be discharged. Then enter the king, Cla. & Glo. & the rest, & make a

\(^{53}\)Cited Ferguson, 41.

\(^{54}\)Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, 3:201.

\(^{55}\)Saccio ascribes the number of off-stage deaths in *2 and 3 Henry VI* to Shakespeare's thematic purpose of showing the deterioration of chivalric standards. While I agree with Saccio's overall view of the *Henry VI* plays, he incorrectly implies that the heroic deaths of *1 Henry VI* are the direct result of onstage combat. Talbot and Young Talbot both receive their fatal wounds offstage. Peter Saccio, "Images of History in *3 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 8 (1984): 18.
great shout, and crie, for Yorke, for Yorke, and then the Queene is taken, & the prince, & Oxf. & Sum. and then sound and enter all againe.

The True Tragedy account of the battle, while detailed, is not totally explicit; exactly how Margaret and the Prince are taken is left to the imagination, and York's (i.e. Edward's) flight is also unclear as to whether or not it is during actual combat. Some crossing of swords in the Queen's capture would be helpful, however, especially as it would invite comparison to the capture of York in 1.4--more working out of the familial revenge motif which climaxes in the murder of the Prince (5.5.40). The fact that Prince Edward must re-enter at 5.5.11 is an indication that any scuffle involving his capture would have to work its way offstage.

The reason for accepting the reported text's stage direction as a true account of the 1590-91 stage business is not the same as in the other instances previously discussed. The action here is not closer to what it described in Hall or Holinshed, but it is more illustrative of the play's theme as it is developed in this scene. First, we see again that the young Duke of Gloucester, at this point already plotting his own path to the throne, is a courageous warrior; in 5.3 it is he who encourages his brother to re-engage the Queen's forces immediately and not give them a chance to regroup. There is, indeed, something analogous to this in Hall, where we read that Richard "valyantly with his battayle assaulted the trenche of the Queenes camp."56 This attack was repulsed, however, and the capture occurred later.

Second, we see that totally contrary to Hall, in all of the Barnet-Tewkesbury sequence Edward does no onstage fighting, and, at Tewkesbury, according to the reporter, flees. While his side is

56Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 3:205
triumphant, there is no sense of a personal triumph for Edward, reinforcing the overall picture we have of him as an unworthy victor in an unworthy war. This gives us an even stronger impression that most of the credit for the victory belongs with young Richard—indeed in 1.2 it is Richard who persuades his father to break his agreement and renew the wars, and in 2.3, after Towton, when Warwick, Edward, and Clarence are dejected, it is again Richard who goads them on to renew the fight. In Barnet/Tewkesbury, then, Shakespeare shows Richard as a formidable swordsman and a courageous military leader, providing an illuminating sidelight to the character of a man who, to the Elizabethans, was probably the most notorious arch-villain in their history.

As with Towton, the director of this sequence in a modern production could make good use of modern theatre technology to evoke all the metaphorical significance of the engagement. Keeping in mind the point that Barnet and Tewkesbury are, in effect, combined into one battle, we find that Oman describes Barnet as a battle fought in a thick fog.\(^{57}\) A conflict in which one cannot properly see what one is doing is an apt symbol for the state of England in 2 and 3 Henry VI, when English chivalry is seen at its lowest, and the distance between its ideal and its reality is at its widest. This is in itself evocative of the Arthurian legend; as Barbara Tuchman notes:

> When the gap between the ideal and the real becomes too wide, the system breaks down. Legend and story have always reflected this; in the Arthurian romances the Round Table is shattered from within. The sword is returned to the lake; the effort begins anew.\(^{58}\)

This brings us to the end of the discussion of military swordfighting in Henry VI, in which I have examined the remarkably

\(^{57}\)Oman, 2:417.

\(^{58}\)Tuchman, xix-xx.
innovative nature Shakespeare's stagecraft in placing such a high amount of fighting onstage, and have attempted to explain how each fight must be carefully analyzed for indications of how it, when staged accordingly, can illuminate the character and thematic development of the plays.

I have also tried to give an indication of how spectacular these fights can be today, when executed by skillful actors. Altogether, they form a major part of the unified artistic achievement that is Henry VI, an achievement which can best be appreciated only by seeing the plays well performed.
CHAPTER VII

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING—RICHARD III

In moving from Henry VI to Richard III, we go from three of Shakespeare's least-known plays to one which is frequently performed. The lurid melodramatics of the plot and the fascination with Shakespeare's first villainous protagonist have made the play, as least as far as popularity is concerned, comparable to the great tragedies, and it has been a dependable vehicle for the great or would-be-great actors of each age to show the best of their histrionic powers. Burbage was noted for his Richard,¹ and although the praise given to individual actors has not always been universal, Richard III has retained its status as a "star vehicle."

The play has one major swordfight to represent the Battle of Bosworth field, as Richard and Richmond meet in single combat to bring the fighting of the Wars of the Roses to a close. The many differences amongst the quarto versions and F version of Richard III make for intriguing but vexing questions over the text; fortunately for our purposes, the dialogue and stage directions that depict the "arbitrement of bloody strokes and mortal-staring war" (5.3.89-90) show no significant discrepancies.

The weaponry of the Shakespearean knight in the Wars of the Roses has been discussed; there is no reason to assume that Richard III would be different in presentation of military swordfighting from the plays which immediately precede it both in historical content and in probable date of composition. As did Talbot, York, and Clifford, and Richard himself in Henry VI, the original Richard and Richmond would have worn essentially Elizabethan armour, covered with a colorful gown, and would most probably have fought with sword and target or bastard-sword. As there is no reference to weaponry in the dialogue of either character, however, the modern director has some leeway in choice of weapons, and I will argue that it is possible that Richard used, in Shakespeare's time, and might use today, an axe, creating some references rich in irony to the play's imagery in so doing.

**Richmond's Use of Doubles**

As has been noted previously, The True Tragedy of Richard III, as far as can be decided from an obviously corrupt text, has the climactic fight offstage, and Legge's Richardus Tertius does the same, making Shakespeare the innovator in showing the single combat between Richard and Richmond onstage. This encounter is prepared for by one of the most famous of all Shakespearean lines, "a horse, . . ." (5.4.7), Richard's violent refusal of an invitation from Catesby to withdraw to safety, and the strident claim by Richard to have slain "five" Richmonds:

I think there be six Richmonds in the field:
Five have I slain to-day in stead of him.  

(5.4.11-12)

In the New Arden edition, Anthony Hammond notes that the six Richmonds are Shakespeare's invention, and "it seems hardly appropriate
in the heroic Richmond."² That Shakespeare strips some of the heroic luster from Richmond's armor by having Richard make this claim may be challenged once one remembers that Shakespeare is accurately reconstructing what were some of the genuine practices of warfare in the late medieval period. There was no question of the use of doubles being a cowardly act, because, as Tuchman notes, for all intents and purposes a king was usually in little danger of being killed in a battle; he would draw an enormous ransom if captured. Hall and Holinshed record Henry IV's use of doubles at Shrewsbury, which is shown in ¹ Henry IV, and Tuchman tells us that King John of France had nineteen doubles at Poitiers.³ Even if there is some inconsistency, however, in Richmond's using doubles, it might be seen as allowable in that Shakespeare's main intent is to amplify our impression of Richard's virtually maniacal courage on the battlefield, something he has been at pains to establish since Richard's first appearance in ² Henry VI; the horse he desperately desires is to help him locate and challenge Richmond after having slain five of his doubles.

Bosworth Field

The Battle of Bosworth Field begins immediately after Richard's battle cry, "victory sits in our helms" (5.3.351). Q and F read

Alarum, excursions, Enter Catesby.

CAT. Rescue! My lord of Norfolk, rescue, rescue! The King enacts more wonders than a man, Daring an opposite to any danger. His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights, Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death. Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!


³Tuchman, 147. John was nevertheless captured.
Alarums. 4 Enter Richard.

RICH. A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse! (5.4.1-7)

For the same reasons as given above for some swordplay at the end of 1.2 of 3 Henry VI, 5 it is likely that in this instance Shakespeare calls for some infantry fighting to establish the passage of time, during which Richard "enacts more wonders than a man," only to lose his mount. I would argue, though, that Richard himself would remain offstage, letting his "wonders" exist only in the imagination of the audience, so as not to detract from the emphasis placed on his climactic single encounter with Richmond.

Following the exchange with Catesby about the "six Richmonds," the single combat is described in the stage direction, which reads in Q:

Alarum. Enter Richard and Richmond they fight, Richard is slain then retreat being sounded. Enter Richmond, Derby, bearing the crowne, with other Lords, &c.

F shows almost the same:

Alarum. Enter Richard and Richmond, they fight, Richard is slaine.

Retreat and flourish. Enter Richmond, Derby bearing the Crowne, with divers other Lords. (5.5.06D)

The only ambiguity here is the matter of the removal of Richard's body, a point over which the noted early editors of Shakespeare have sharply disagreed, leading some to change the stage direction to one of "exequit fighting." Those keeping the F direction for Richard to be slain on stage include Pope (1723-25), Theobald (1733), Hamner (1743-44), and Dr. Johnson (1765), while proponents of an offstage death for Richard include Rowe (1709), Capell (1768), Malone (1790), and Steevens

4This "alarums" is not in Q.

5See above, 167-68.
Dyce (1886) strongly states the case for "exeunt fighting":

If, after Richard is killed in the sight of the audience, Stanley enters bearing the crown which he has plucked off from his "dead temples," there must have been two Richards in the field . . .

Richard and Richmond were evidently intended by the author to go off the stage, fighting.6

In more recent times, however, editors have reproduced the F stage direction without comment.

Hammond attempts to solve this difficult problem by deducing that "the stage keepers acted their routine part of bearers--of-the dead, and carried him off."7 While this is plausible, it must also be said that the extent to which the stagekeepers' duties involved filling in as supernumeraries is something about which virtually nothing is known: G.E Bentley cites only two plays, Heywood's The Captives and the anonymous Two Noble Ladies, in which the prompt copy has a marginal notation indicating that the stagekeeper is to play the part of a guard. He is also a character in the induction to Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, but this part would surely have been taken by an actor. While Bentley's opinion that the stagekeepers did often serve as supernumeraries is one I agree with, this is still some distance from Hammond's idea that hired men would appear from the tiring house to "routinely" remove dead bodies, or that such practice would have been a standard convention acceptable to an Elizabethan audience; indeed it could be seen as obtrusive, even comic. In any event, they would not be required to remove Richard's body from Bosworth Field, as this task


7Hammond, 329.
could be accomplished by standard-bearers.\(^8\)

**Standard-Bearers in Late Medieval Warfare**

In warfare of this period, members of the nobility were always accompanied by the bearer of a banner (or pennon, if the person was of lower rank), for an important tactical and legal reason. Such banners were a means of establishing the identity of the combatant, particularly necessary in an age of closed helmets, and one of the chief responsibilities of the herald, as Maurice Keen notes, was to be sufficiently expert in recognizing insignia to be able to tell his prince who was about to engage him in battle.\(^9\) The importance of learning the identity of a warrior was not simply that of ascertaining if he be friend or foe; given the emphasis placed upon the laws of capture and ransom in this era, heraldic insignia would have served as the only reliable means of choosing an opponent who was likely to bring a large ransom if captured.

Banners also served as a formal challenge to begin the fight; Malcolm Vale records that "it was \(lèse majesté\) to flee from a battle in which banners had been unfurled," and Keen notes that "once his banner was unfurled, [a Prince] had given a challenge to combat and a state of war legally existed. From this moment on, the laws of war were in force."\(^10\) The circumstances upon which the battle was to be fought would also be announced by banners. Keen records the distinctions amongst *guerre mortelle*, *bellum hostile*, and *guerre couverte*, the latter two being forms of limited warfare, while *guerre mortelle*, in

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\(^8\)Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time*, 101-05. See also Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, 192.

\(^9\)Keen, *Chivalry*, 125, 135.

which no prisoners were to be taken, would be proclaimed by the unfurling of the oriflamme, as the French did at Crecy and Poictiers, although in both events this proved to be something of a moot point.

Lord Berners' translation of Froissart contains an interesting account, which Shakespeare almost surely would have read, of the capture of Hotspur's pennon at the Battle of Otterburn:

... there fought hande to hande the erle Duglas and Sir Henry Percy, and by the force of armes the erle Duglas wanne the pennon of Syr Henry Percyes, wherwith he was sore dyspleased, and so were all the englyssmen, and the erle Duglas sayd to sir Henry Percy, syr, I shall beare this token of your prowes in to Scotlande, and shall sette it on hyghe on my castell ... come this nyght to my lodgynge and seke for your pennon. I shall sette it befor my lodgyng, and se if ye will come to take it away.

The entrance of Richmond's force at the start of 5.2 is one of the fourteen military entrances in Shakespeare "with drum and colors," indicating that there were sufficient supernumeraries employed to portray soldiers and standard-bearers, and although there is no mention of such standard-bearers in the stage direction dealing with Richard's death, they are included in his final battle exhortation: "Advance, our standards! Set upon our foes!" (5.3.349). In view of all these historical and theatrical indications, it is fair to assume that standard-bearers would be present on stage while Richard and Richmond fight; indeed, to an Elizabethan audience, their absence could have been seen as an incongruity. They would also be the obvious persons to carry off the body of the slain king.

11Keen, Laws of War, 104-5; Tuchman, 387. See Henry V (1.2.101).


13Universities and other producing organizations with a preponderance of actresses should take heart at Tuchman's observation that at the Battle of Roosebeeke in 1383, Philip van Artevelde's banner-bearer was a woman named "Big Margot." Tuchman, 391.
Weaponry

What weapons did Burbage and his opponent employ in the 1590s? While it is probable that they, as did the knights of Henry VI, fought with bastard-sword or sword and target, there is something of a case to be made for the use of a battle-axe.

First, the chronicles show that this was a common weapon for the knight in the Wars of the Roses. Hall records that at Tewkesbury, Somerset killed Lord Wenloke with "a terrible stroke" of an axe, and that Lord Fitzwater used a "pollax" in an incident near Towton. There is also some evidence that they were used in the theatre, as Henslowe's property list shows "i wooden hatchet, i leather hatchet." While this might refer to a farm and not a military implement, there would be little difference, if any, between the "hatchet" of an Elizabethan farmer and the short-handled battle-axe.

Martha Fleischer, in her 1974 essay, notes that Tamburlaine has one--"see where it is, the keenest curtle-axe" (1 Tamb. 2.3.55)--but OED defines a "curtal-ax" as "a short broad cutting sword ... apparently sometimes taken by persons unfamiliar with the weapons as some kind of battle-ax." The person mistaken, however, might be

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14Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources 3:205, 3:181. A "pollax" (pole-axe) as it was sometimes defined in Shakespeare's time, is not the same thing as a battle-axe, as the former had a much longer handle (hence the name). OED, however, cites Chaucer in showing its original meaning to be a short-handled axe for close-quarters fighting, and this usage existed until the eighteenth century, as the shorter weapon was used in naval warfare. See also Ashdown, 210, 240; Norman and Wilson, 62.

15Poakes and Rickert, ed., 319. OED makes no distinction between the two, other than noting that the hatchet could be held with one hand.

16Martha H. Fleisher, The Iconography of the English History
Play, Studies in English Literature: Elizabethan and Renaissance
Studies (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur,
Universität Salzburg, 1975), 181.
Marlowe and not Fleischer, as OED cites Spenser as one of those who used "curtal-ax" meaning "battle-axe."

Fleischer also points to the stage direction that some modern editors insert at 5.5.106 of Richard II, where the King kills one of his assailants:

K. RICH. . . . Villain, thy own hand yields thy death's instrument.

Snatches an axe from a Servant and kills him.

In the New Arden Richard II, Peter Ure explains that although there is no stage direction at all at this point in Q or F, Holinshed relates that Richard "wrung the 'bill' out of the hands of one of the eight murderers and slew four of them with it,"17 and it appears that this is sufficient reason for some editors to indicate the same action for Shakespeare's king. While I feel that this editorial inference is not fully warranted—the scene would be simpler and would work as well with Richard seizing a dagger or sword—an axe certainly could be used here with good effect.

With these points kept in mind, the strongest reason for the use of an axe at Bosworth Field is that it would create a picture rich with dramatic irony. While the word "axe" does not itself appear in Richard III, it is spoken twice in 2 Henry VI and no less than four times in 3 Henry VI, most significantly by Richard himself in his extraordinary soliloquy where he evokes an image of the woodsman's axe, the executioner's axe, and the battle-axe simultaneously:

And I—like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rends the thorns, and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way,
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out—

Torment myself to catch the English crown;
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.

(3.2.174-81)

It has been previously argued that the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III are indeed a tetralogy, and that thematic material pertaining to Richard III may be justifiably found in the other three plays, or dare one say, parts of the same play. As the story of Richard III unfolds, the "bloody axe" is indeed put to use, as Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, and Buckingham are beheaded in public execution. Further to this point, Fleischer mentions the axe as a powerful symbol of death, and says that Richard's "hewing" may indeed signal Hastings' fate. 18

The last scene of Richard III before the military ones which close the play shows Buckingham being led to execution. It is quite likely that the executioner, with his axe, would precede him in the procession, but even if this were not the case, the visible presence of large axe-blades on the stage in this scene cannot be questioned, as F reads "enter Buckingham with Halberds, led to execution" (5.1.OSD).

Shakespeare could have considered it fitting, then, that Richard would die using the weapon by which he lived. On the other hand, a case may be made that Richmond would be the more appropriate person to use one, as he is "executing" the villain who has done the same to so many others—indeed, the choreography might show a Hamlet-like "exchange," and then Richard would be both literally and figuratively killed with his own terrible weapon.

The main argument against the axe is practical rather than textual, thematic, or historical. Although we know axes were amongst

18Fleischer, 181.
Elizabethan stage properties, we have no way of knowing if they were used in combat. While it may be assumed that a Burbage or a Pope knew a good deal about how to handle a sword, axes did not have a similar everyday use as a means of self-defense, and although, as personal experience attests, staging a verisimilar fight with a battle-axe is not impossible,\(^1^9\) it is more likely that Elizabethan actors would have preferred the familiar sword. This is another matter about which it is impossible to draw firm conclusions but is nonetheless a stimulus to some interesting guesses.

Alan Dessen presents an alternative idea: Richard should be killed by a sword with "the thrust he asks for but does not receive from Lady Anne in 1.2."\(^2^0\) While it is impossible to say with certainty which weapons Burbage and his opponent used, it is clear that this fight would have been a spectacular and, at the same time, horrifying display of stage combat, as Shaw's beloved "Prince of Punches"\(^2^1\) goes bravely

\[
... 
\text{to't pell-mell;}
\text{If not to Heaven, then hand in hand to Hell.}
\]

(5.3.312-13)

The Richard-Richmond Combat

Assuming that the version of Richard's death and of the removal of his body given here is correct, the Richard III fight represents a further development in Shakespeare's innovative use of the swordfight, as this is the first in which a leading character dies immediately as

\(^1^9\)At Ashland in 1969, I had Austria fight the Bastard with an axe in King John.

\(^2^0\)Dessen, Elizabethan Stage Conventions, 128.

the result of a wound received in onstage combat. What is the significance of having Richard killed in this way? The "hero" of Henry VI, Talbot, is not, for reasons discussed above, and in 3 Henry VI the manner of death for Richard's father is anything but heroic. The fact that the chronicles do not have Talbot and York dying in single combat means nothing—neither does Richard, and it seems strange at first glance that the great hero Talbot dies as he does while the arch-villain who "enacts more wonders than a man" (5.4.2) on the battlefield must get, as I believe he should, our admiration in his final moments.

Part of the answer could lie in the fact that Richard is not to be given an in extremis speech such as is given to Talbot and Warwick. Anything said by Richard at this point would only serve to remove impact from his last two major speeches, the soliloquy upon waking from a dream, when he, for the first and last time, feels remorse (5.3.178-206), and "his oration to his army" (5.3.314-341). It may be seen as important to the structural integrity of the play that 5.3.178-206 is indeed the only time remorse is expressed, so an additional speech, were there to be one, could not be confessional. Should some final curse of Richmond be given, Richard suddenly becomes a ranting arch-fiend in the manner of Marlowe's Barabas, and while there may indeed be some parallels between Richard and Marlowe's character, it is unlikely that Shakespeare would wish to have his main character behave at his final exit in a way which is totally alien to his manner, however

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22 Holinshed does have Richard and Richmond fighting hand to hand, but they are separated after Stanley's forces come to the aid of Richmond: "King Richard's men were driven backe and fled, & he himselfe, manfullie fighting in the middle of his enimies, was slaine." Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande, 6 vols. (Reprint, London: 1807-08), 3:444.
reprehensible his actions, as it has been seen over three plays. The solution, then, is to have Richard die wordlessly as the result of a sudden, fatal thrust or blow.

We might also speculate as to why no pre-fight words are exchanged between Richard and Richmond in the manner of York and Clifford or Macbeth and Macduff; the bitter exchange between Richard and Young Clifford before their fight in 3 Henry VI (2.4.1-11) is in stark opposition to this silent encounter. First, words of praise for one's opponent, as in 2 Henry VI (5.2.19-27) would hardly be in order here. Second, a pattern has established itself, through 2 and 3 Henry VI, that in the fights where angry words are exchanged, the emphasis is on the personal or familial nature of the quarrel. In this sense, the Richard-Richmond fight is of another sort, as there is nothing in the play to indicate that Richard and "England's Hope" have ever met; Richard has, in fact, little to say about Richmond on a personal level anywhere.

The first mention of Richmond in the play is made by Queen Elizabeth at 4.1.42, and he is spoken of for the first time in Richard's presence by Stanley in 4.2:

Know, my loving lord,
The Marquess Dorset, as I hear, is fled
To Richmond in the parts where he abides.

(4.2.47-49)

Richard's attitude to Richmond is first shown when he relates the story of the prophecies of Henry VI and the Mayor of Exeter, and says that Richmond was a "peevious boy" (4.2.97).

The next personal reference is in 4.4, when he is told that "Richmond is on the seas":

189
There let him sink, and be the seas on him!
White-liver'd runagate, what doth he there?23

(4.4.463-64)

The third and last personal remark about Richmond is during Richard's "oration to his army," where at least some mention of the enemy commander would be dramatically obligatory:

And who doth lead them but a paltry fellow,
Long kept in Bretagne at our mother's cost?
A milksop, one that never in his life
Felt so much cold as over shoes in snow?

(5.3.323-26)

From these three references, extremely mild compared to what Richard has to say about Young Clifford in 3 Henry VI, the impression is given that Richard sees Richmond as an opponent to be dismissed, and simply not worth any personal hatred, a point modern-day Burbages would do well to take note of in the interests of a portrayal as faithful as possible to Shakespeare's intentions.

Regarding the specific choreography of the Richard-Richmond fight, little more can be said beyond the fact that it obviously depends on the weapons employed. Whatever the actual moves, though, the modern director should attempt to arrange as furious and realistic a fight as would have been expected in the 1590s by those who had seen 2 and 3 Henry VI. While I agree with Hammond's view that "nothing becomes Richard in the play so well as his death," he is incorrect in saying that "the element of ritual is crucial to the work, and should not be eschewed in favor of naturalistic action, especially in the battle scene, where balletic rather than realistic action suits better the sacrificial nature of the elimination of Richard from the world."24

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23Hammond notes that "white-liver'd runagate" means "cowardly renegade," and that Richard "is in an unusually imperial mood, and regards Richmond as a disloyal subject." Hammond, 297.

24Hammond, 73, 106.
In this instance Hammond betrays an imprecision in his use of "ritual," "balletic," and "naturalistic" as they apply to the practicalities of theatrical presentation, apparently laboring under the false assumption that drama taken from ritual, such as Greek tragedy, was somehow "ritualistic," i.e. not "naturalistic," in presentation. Significantly, he cites Tillyard's comment that Richard III can have "the solemnity we associate with the Dionysia at Athens and the Wagner festival at Bayreuth." Tillyard's reference to Wagner, however helpful in clarifying his point, is to be ignored; Hammond's use of it is in the context of Shakespeare's intention, and it only clouds the issue to compare Shakespeare to a later dramatist in this manner. If, however, as seems to be the case, Tillyard, with his reference to the Dionysia, regards all of Richard III, and Hammond the final swordfight, as reminiscent of "solemn" tragedy, then their view may be called into question.

A response to the assertion that Greek tragedy was and is somehow "formal" or "solemn" in presentation is to be found in the brilliant, and brilliantly scathing, comments of H.D.F. Kitto, who ironically shows how Aeschylus must have forgotten he was writing "Aeschylus" when he filled his plays, particularly their choral odes, with music and dancing of the most energetic and "tumultuous" sort—as turbulent, one might add, as a Shakespearean swordfight. I believe that Elizabethan playgoers would respond to a "balletic" or "ritual" battle of Bosworth Field in exactly the same manner as Athenians would to a "balletic" tragedy, as argued by Kitto: "they would not have endured it for five

25 Hammond, 109

Robert Ornstein's observations on the fight are also of interest:

So little emphasis . . . is placed on Richmond's military prowess that, were it not for the stage direction of the last scene of the play, we would not know that he kills Richard in combat. Under the banner of the Red Cross Knight, Richmond sallies forth against a dragon who is already doomed--deserted by his followers, sapped of vitality, and sick at heart.28

In a footnote, Ornstein goes on to compare the fight to the Macbeth-Macduff clash:

When Shakespeare wishes to make the triumph of good over evil important . . . he makes the confrontation genuinely dramatic, a clash of words and personalities as well as swords. That Richmond should defeat Richard in single combat is not essential to the moral design and dramatic resolution of Richard III.29

Ornstein's points will be taken in order: First, that the fight is not explicitly called for in the dialogue does not make it in any way less emphatic; in a sense, we are back with the original objection of Schlegel to Shakespearean swordfights, and Ornstein's view might be answered in a similar fashion: the stage business of a play, reflected in dialogue or not, is a thoroughly integrated part of the poetic whole, and cannot be dismissed as easily as he would imply. Second, Richmond's military prowess is not the main issue, as attention rightly belongs with Richard. It is hard to see how someone who has slain "five Richmonds" and who "enacts more wonders than a man" could be deemed "sapped of vitality." As for the comparison with the Macbeth fight, the reason why Shakespeare does not include pre-fight dialogue in Richard III has been noted above; the personal relationship of Richard and Richmond is entirely different from that of Macbeth and

27Kitto, 250.
28Ornstein, 79-80.
29Ornstein, 79.
Macduff, and it is simplistic to say that the Macbeth fight is more "genuinely dramatic" only because Macbeth and Macduff exchange words. It is difficult, then, to consider Ornstein correct in his assertion that the Richard-Richmond single combat is "not essential" to the play's "dramatic resolution."

As is offered by Hammond in the New Arden edition, an opinion will be given here as to the optimum staging of the Richard III combat in a modern production. The director, it has already been noted, can use the choice of weapons and style of choreography to amplify the dramatic irony of the final combat. What also could prove interesting is the use of costuming and lighting to draw attention to the imagery in the play which points to the cold and cloudy weather at Bosworth Field in August, 1485:

The air [F: dew] is raw and cold. (5.3.46)

Then he [the sun] disdains to shine. (5.3.278)

The sun will not be seen to-day.
The sky doth frown and low'r upon our army. (5.3.282-83)

A milksop, one that never in his life
Felt so much cold as over shoes in snow. (5.3.325-26)

This emphasis on weather leads one to recall the initial metaphor of the play:

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York ... (1.1.1-2)

These lines have an implicit allusion to the "three fair shining suns" on the target of [Edward] York in 3 Henry VI (2.1.40), which are in turn reflected in the standards of Edward IV and Richard III, with
their white rose *en soleil*.\(^{30}\)

Hence, battle capes or other paraphernalia to keep out the cold, as well as atmospheric lighting, can do much to reinforce the dramatic effect of the Richard-Richmond combat.

Although it is not within the scope of this study to offer a stage history of the Shakespearean swordfights, Hazlitt's description of Kean's fighting as Richard III (in the Colley Cibber version) deserves some comment. While the circumstances of the fight are somewhat different in the Cibber text, Hazlitt provides an excellent view of the quality the modern actor and director of stage combat should strive for in providing a climactic end to the theatrical life, extending over three plays, of one of Shakespeare's most enduring, and to some, such as Shaw, endearing characters:

He fights like one drunk with wounds; and the attitude in which he stands with his hands stretched out, after his sword is wrested from him, has a preternatural and terrific grandeur, as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had power to kill.\(^{31}\)


CHAPTER VIII

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING--KING JOHN

The reasons for taking King John at this point, out of what has been generally accepted as the order of composition of Shakespeare's plays, have been noted above, although it makes, for our purposes, no difference; Richard II does not contain any swordfighting, and will be discussed only as it offers comparison with the other plays in Shakespeare's historic epic.

King John is one of the more difficult texts to deal with in the context of this study; there is the question of the relationship of Shakespeare's play with The Troublesome Raigne of King John (hereafter called the Troublesome Raigne), first published in 1591.¹

Relationship of King John to The Troublesome Raigne

Until the publication of Honigmann's New Arden edition, Dover Wilson's view that King John was based entirely on the Troublesome Raigne was accepted as correct.² Honigmann put forth the theory, developed in conjunction with the work of Peter Alexander, that the Troublesome Raigne is a reconstruction made for the Queen's Men.

¹Quotations from the Troublesome Raigne are from Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, vol. 4.

²Honigmann, ed., King John; J. Dover Wilson, introd., King John (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), xvii-lvii.
Indeed, Honigmann's view of *King John* is in some respects analogous to the views of those who showed that 2 and 3 *Henry VI* preceded the *Contention* plays, but while the opinion that the *Contention* plays are reported texts of 2 and 3 *Henry VI* has gained general acceptance, Honigmann's idea has received little support, although it must be noted that no critic has been willing to discount it totally. As F.B. Williams wrote in his review of the New Arden *King John*, "Mr. Honigmann has failed to shake Professor Wilson's case, yet he has raised points that need to be answered. Further study is in order." Unfortunately, what further study has been undertaken has not been very fruitful.

Bullough, in his 1962 study of *King John*'s sources, gives the opinion, reached "after some vacillation," that Shakespeare's text came second, and Champion summed up the situation neatly in 1979 with "dating *King John* from external evidence is simply impossible." While R.L. Smallwood, in the New Penguin *King John* (1974), casts strong doubt on Honigmann's theory, he does not discredit it entirely, and in his survey of criticism of Shakespeare's histories from 1952 to 1983, Dennis H. Burden regards the matter as still unresolved.

In view of the remaining doubts over this issue, it becomes

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necessary to discuss the swordplay in *King John* from each of two opposing points of view, as certain ideas are given greater weight if the *Troublesome Raigne* is a reconstruction of *King John*, while other patterns appear to emerge if the *Troublesome Raigne* is to be considered a source.

**Examination of Swordfights with The Troublesome Raigne as a Memorial Reconstruction**

If we accept Honigmann's view that the *Troublesome Raigne* is a reconstruction, then its stage directions are to be accorded added authority, as they could well describe, as do some of the directions in the *Contention* plays, the actual manner in which analogous actions were performed in the original production of *King John*. With temporary acceptance of the precedence of *King John* in mind, then, an examination of the swordfighting sequences in it may commence.

The first military sequence is in 2.1, the very long scene (598 lines) before the gates of Angiers. After the pre-battle parley in which John of England and Philip of France each unsuccessfully demands that the city give allegiance to his side, a scene which shows Shakespeare's knowledge of the laws of siege, 5 F reads "Here, after excursions, enter the Herald of France, with Trumpets, to the gates" (2.1.299.SD).

It is obvious that onstage fighting is not required, and the military action could be depicted by the more simple movements of

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5 The activities of the heralds, the threats of the French and English kings, and the vacillation of the Citizen of Angiers, as Shakespeare shows them, are consistent with the strict laws of siege warfare operant in the late medieval period. The Citizen of Angiers is faced with a real dilemma, for if he submits to one side, and the other side takes the city, he would almost certainly be executed for treason. See Keen, *Laws of War*, 119-55.
soldiers. However, as I have argued in my discussion of Henry VI, the stage direction "excursions," not requiring actual swordplay, does not preclude it, and so it is possible that some fighting might occur. It is unlikely that "John Softsword" would be expected to fight, but it would be in character for Lewis, the Bastard, and Austria to take part in the combat. One thing is clear, however: there are numerous (anachronistic) references to artillery in the play, and this military sequence would be made more effective in Shakespeare's day and our own by the setting off of charges in the theatre.7

There is a second engagement after Pandulph convinces the French to break their agreement with John. F shows "Alarums, excursions. Enter Bastard with Austria's head" (3.2.OSD). After the brief exchange between John and the Bastard which accounts for six of the short scene's ten lines, the last military action before Lewis' invasion in act five occurs: "Alarums, excursions, retreat. Enter John, Elinor, Arthur, Bastard, Hubert, Lords" (3.3.OSD).

Four things point to the strong possibility that in these sequences the Bastard and Austria fought onstage in the original production of the play. First to consider are the stage directions in the Troublesome Raigne. For the initial engagement, they read

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7 See above, 118.
"Excursions. The Bastard chaseth Lymoges the Austrich duke, and maketh him leave the lyon's skinne" (1. 655.SD), and for the second engagement, "Excursions. The Bastard pursues Austria, and kills him" (1. 1043.SD).

There is no suggestion here that the Troublesome Raigne stage directions serve to report what actually happened in King John in the manner in which, it has been argued, some of the Contention and True Tragedy stage directions do for Henry VI; it would be inconsistent for Austria to lose his lion's skin at this point in King John—he still has it later in the play, as Constance remarks: "Thou wear a lion's hide! Doff it for shame" (3.1.128).

Given the text of the two plays, there is one possibility so obvious I hesitate to mention it: Shakespeare's company had a lion's skin and a human head, while the company that performed the Troublesome Raigne had only the skin. In the Troublesome Raigne the Bastard presents the skin to Blanche, as noted by Honigmann, but in King John the Bastard does not mention it after either of the two combat scenes. This, then, allows us to reconstruct the second fight as being a forerunner to Macbeth and Macduff, as their combat is often staged: the swordplay takes them offstage and then the victor enters with one of Elizabethan drama's most popular properties, although in the instance of the Troublesome Raigne one company appears to have found itself without one. Even allowing for such discrepancies, however, the Troublesome Raigne, be it either a bad quarto or a source, indicates that there would be some swordplay at this point in King John.

Second, and more important than speculation about Austria's head, is the fact that given the overall pattern of Shakespeare's use of swordplay by principal characters in the first tetralogy, the audience

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8Honigmann, ed., King John, 74.
for this play would have expected it. There are the pre-fight insults between the Bastard and Austria in the same manner as we see between York and his sons and the Cliffords in 2 Henry VI, although, in keeping with the Bastard's character, they are more humorous here. Indeed, this is partly a family quarrel, as the Bastard could say, if he wished, "your father slew my [natural] father." We know that Burbage played Richard III; in this instance I disagree with Baldwin, who, on the basis of his "line," assigns John to Burbage and the Bastard to Pope.9 The Bastard is the bigger role, and, in any event, is more within Burbage's "line," as it may have existed then, than is John. As Champion notes, it is the Bastard who "possesses the same sardonic wit and verve"10 seen in Richard, and it would appear very strange for a dashing Burbage character to challenge someone to a fight and then do the fighting onstage.

Third, it also makes dramatic sense for there to be actual fighting, as the leading up to the second fight is composed with intense dramatic power. The mocking treatment the Bastard gives Austria--

Will't not be?

Will not a calf's skin stop that mouth of thine? (3.1.298-99)

—is followed by Blanche's vacillation. John, after fuming silently for the sixteen lines of Blanche's and Lewis's dialogue, gives a crisp order to the Bastard, and then, full of anger, turns on Philip:

K.JOHN. Cousin, go draw our puissance together.
France, I am burned up with inflaming wrath,
A rage, whose heat hath this condition,
That nothing can allay, nothing but blood,
The blood and dearest-valued blood of France.

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9Baldwin, 237, 246.

10Champion, 43.
K.PHI. Thy rage shall burn thee up, and thou shalt turn
To ashes, ere our blood shall quench that fire.
Look to thyself, thou art in jeopardy.

K.JOHN. No more than he that threats. To arms let's hie!

(3.1.339-47)

Given the intensity of this sequence, it becomes difficult to believe that Shakespeare would follow it with mere running across the stage, however punctuated by impressive sound effects, before the subsequent entrance of the Bastard. While this is not evidence, it might be added that in James Sandoe's splendid production of King John at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival in 1964, the end of 3.1, backed by ominous drums, held spine-chilling power, making the furious swordfighting that followed seem obligatory.

Fourth and finally, there is the development of the Bastard's character which must be considered. James L. Calderwood, in his essay of 1965, traces the Bastard's progress from that of an amusing opportunist, devoted to "commodity," to a knight with a strong sense of honor at the play's close:

If John has sunk to the contemptible depths of Commodity, even to the point of shaming An English King, the Bastard has steadily risen towards the genuine Honour befitting An English King. His words over the body of Arthur are a major indication of his spiritual growth.11

While Calderwood feels that the Bastard's major interest in avenging his father's death is one of "acquiring prestige,"12 and even taking the Bastard's brash self-confidence into account, there is nevertheless an element of having to prove himself to himself in battle, as does


12Calderwood, 94.
Prince Hal when he takes on Hotspur. Indeed, the fight occurs—the only question is whether on stage or in the tiring house—and considering the type of character he is, it would be as inappropriate for the Bastard to fight offstage as it would be for Hal.

The other military sequence in King John occurs in act five, when Lewis, aided by the rebellious barons, invades England. Shakespeare is as chronologically unhistorical here as he was in 1 Henry VI: Honigmann feels that he is representing Lewis' defeat at Lincoln, which was actually after King John's death. Before the battle, there is a strong rhetorical exchange between the Bastard and Lewis, punctuated by the background of military drums, although even here there is some confusion, as Lewis gives an order to "strike up our drums" twice, once at 5.2.164 and again at 5.2.179. After the exit of the Bastard and Pandulph on one side and Lewis and the rebellious English nobles on the other, F indicates the battle with "Alarums. Enter John and Hubert" (5.3.0SD).

Act five, scene three, a short scene occurring during the battle, shows John being asked to leave the field, and includes two important expository features: Lewis' supply ships have been wrecked, and John is gravely ill. The Troublesome Raigne does not have a counterpart to this scene; it goes directly from the pre-battle parley to Melun's entrance: "Excursions. Enter Meloun [sic] with English lords" (1.720.SD).

King John 5.4 shows the rebels discussing the Bastard's valor in the battle before the wounded Melun enters and, by convincing them of Lewis' treacherous intentions, persuades the barons to return to the English side. The fighting appears to have petered out; it is clearly

13Honigmann, ed., King John, 133.
over when Lewis enters to start 5.5.

It is difficult to decide if Shakespeare would want fighting to be shown in this sequence. The battle is not a dramatically decisive one--John is ill and the barons are about to defect again anyway--and the Bastard, it has been argued, has already proven himself in battle. A tentative conclusion, then, is that alarums, and possibly the excursions mentioned in the True Tragedy, are all that would be desirable, as showing infantry fighting would present practical problems, in that even with gowns and insignia it could be difficult to distinguish the five distinct armies that are present: the Bastard's English force, Lewis' French, and the feudal armies of Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot.

If this conclusion is correct, then all onstage swordfighting in King John is confined to the two sequences near Angiers, and its thematic purpose is to illuminate the growth of the Bastard from the engaging rogue who believes in Commodity to a troubled Englishman who believes in upholding the values of chivalrous conduct.

The Troublesome Raigne as Source

How does our perception of the swordfighting in King John alter if we accept that the Troublesome Raigne came first? It alters radically if we follow Bullough's views on the Angiers sequences. Given the lack of a clear "they fight" or similar direction in F, Bullough states that Shakespeare consciously chose not to show the Troublesome Raigne's "two encounters with Austria in battle . . . perhaps due to a desire not to romanticize the story, and to avoid episodes not essential to the main theme."

14 This view is less than helpful, however, in that Bullough

14Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 4:21.
does not offer an opinion as to what the "main theme" is—while the maturing of the Bastard may indeed not be the main theme of King John, it is an important one, and can be effectively illustrated by showing the Bastard and Austria in onstage combat. Bullough also appears to accept without question the authority of the F stage directions, with their "alarums" and "excursions," as always precluding onstage swordfighting, a view, as has been argued above, which is unjustified.

If it is accepted that the Troublesome Raigne is the earlier play, and also accepted that the Troublesome Raigne contains swordfighting onstage between principal characters, does this affect one of the main points of this study, which is that Shakespeare was the innovator in the use of the theatrical swordfight to illustrate markedly character and theme in the history play, although the "Upstart Crow" may have taken the germ of the idea from Greene? We are left with the problem of the date of the Troublesome Raigne, not as it relates to King John, but as it relates to 1 Henry VI, and, as has been noted above, Cairncross demonstrates that the Troublesome Raigne borrows from 3 Henry VI and Richard III. Cairncross refers, of course, to the written text, but as an interesting guess might be made about Shakespeare's use of Alphonsus, it is also intriguing to speculate about the possibility of the author of the Troublesome Raigne having taken not only dialogue, but also an important concept of stage business, from Shakespeare.

**Arms and Armor**

As King John is set in an historical era more than two hundred years before that of Henry VI, would the swordfighting be of a different nature? This is well before plate armor, and, as has been noted previously, the longer sword became common. A good idea of the weaponry and armor of King John's time can be gotten from the Bayeux
Tapestry, for, as William Reid notes, that which was used by the
European soldier did not change appreciably for "a century or more"
after the Battle of Hastings. In the tapestry:

Horse and foot alike are shown wearing knee-length hauberks of
mail. Some of the horsemen also wear chausses to protect their
legs. Close-fitting coifs of mail or fabric usually appear worn
under helmets which have a protective extension over the nose. A
few also seem to have neck-guards. The helmets in the tapestry
look as though they were constructed of segments and bands, a very
ancient form that was known in the third century AD. Others were
made in one piece, with the nasal defense forged in one over the
skull.15

Reid then goes on to mention the growing use of the gown in the second
half of the twelfth century.16

It is been argued above that the knights of Henry VI would have
worn Elizabethan armor, but would also have worn a gown, effectively
disguising the exact nature of the plate and hence simulating
fifteenth-century armor. The appearance of early thirteenth-century
armor in King John could also be achieved in the same fashion, but the
frequent and anachronistic mention of cannon in King John is an induce-
ment to draw the conclusion that the warfare of King John, and, it will
be argued below, of Troilus and Cressida, is intended to be imagined as
little different from that of Henry VI. Therefore the general nature
of the armor and swordplay, using sword and target or bastard-sword,
could have been identical to what proved so popular in Shakespeare's
first play.

Conclusions

Why is there not more swordfighting in King John? The answer lies
partly in the limitations of the subject matter: the reign of John, in

15Reid, 38.
16Reid, 38.
comparison with the reigns of the Lancastrian kings, was not a good topic for Shakespeare to portray much military action. John's reign (referring here to his legitimate reign, 1199 to 1216, not the time he was Regent in place of the crusading Richard I), did include important military campaigns, all of them disastrous, but in this play Shakespeare is more concerned, as Lily B. Campbell has observed, with papal interference in the affairs of England, something of enormous topical interest in the 1590's, and with the parallels between the death of Arthur and that of Mary, Queen of Scots:

Shakespeare weaves together the troubles of King John with Arthur and his troubles with the church and his troubles with the rebel nobles in support of a foreign power in a pattern familiar to his contemporaries, slighting other aspects of the long contest.17

This is not to say that what Campbell describes represents the main theme of the play, for this would make King John merely allegory. John's political troubles must be seen in a wider context, for King John, as W.H. Matchett observes, "is built around the question of who should be King of England," and we see this question given dramatic form in the Bastard's growing realization of what qualities a true king must possess. When he pledges loyalty to young Henry III, "true honor makes him the best of subjects in a unified England and this, in the logic of the play, is more important than the character of the king."18 Champion writes lucidly of the play's "ambivalence," in which John alternately gains our respect and disdain, although he disagrees with the view that the Bastard matures or develops in any way during the play: "all (his) actions smack strongly of a practical concern for


maintaining both possession and royal favor."\textsuperscript{19}

It is interesting that from a European point of view, the main feature of John's reign was the unification of large areas of France, including Normandy and "Anjou, Touraine, Maine" (2.1.152), through the military successes of Philip II. This is clearly described in Holinshed, and Shakespeare could have given more emphasis to this theme had he so wished, thereby turning the stage into a constant battlefield. One possible reason why he did not immediately presents itself: he had just written a play, \textit{I Henry VI}, which brilliantly shows the loss of English holdings in France through military defeat brought on by political dissension at home. Ever the experimenter, he had no need to repeat himself, and was ready to go on to something else.

\textsuperscript{19}Champion, 40-41.
CHAPTER IX

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING--THE HENRY V PLAYS

1 Henry IV

While the first tetralogy and King John have a large amount of military swordfighting, London theatregoers of the 1590s might have found it surprising that the second tetralogy, while covering an equally warlike time in English history, has almost none. Although the chronicles limit the opportunities for depiction of combat in Richard II, the story of Henry V yields many opportunities for exciting battle sequences similar to those which Shakespeare's audiences would have appreciated in Henry VI, Richard III, and King John. In fact, the Battle of Shrewsbury is the only military action in the reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, and Henry V for which Shakespeare requires onstage fighting, and it will be seen that the Battle of Agincourt, one of the most famous of all Shakespearean battle scenes (at least since the Olivier film of Henry V), does not, in fact, exist, as it is fought offstage; the "brawl ridiculous" of "four or five most ragged foils" does not in any substantive way eventuate.

It has been a major tenet of this study so far that the Elizabethan gentleman saw the Arthurian knight as the ideal role model, and that the two tetralogies are Shakespeare's national epic, to be placed alongside the works of Virgil and Spenser--poems concerning
legendary national heroes—and that the plays therefore represent part of a general cultural trend in Elizabethan England to see itself in this heroic light. Such a cultural orientation is apparent, it has been argued, in 1 Henry VI, with its direct and indirect allusions to England's chivalric past, the structure of the swordfighting sequences serving as important element in reinforcing this Arthurian connection.

Richard II has no battle scenes, and the significance of the abortive Mowbray-Bolingbroke combat will be discussed in relation to the trial by battle in King Lear. We may therefore turn directly to 1 Henry IV, where, as in 1 Henry VI, Shakespeare uses the swordfighting sequences as an important means of developing his theme. Partly because, perhaps, it is the only onstage fighting in the second tetralogy, the Battle of Shrewsbury deserves careful scrutiny.

The Development of Prince Hal's Character and His Challenge to Single Combat

As the legend of this prodigal son who grew up to be a heroic monarch was well known in Elizabethan England, it might be said that Shakespeare had no option but to present Hal as he did,¹ and although commentators are not unanimous in according the Hal of 1 Henry IV this heroic status, a strong tradition of criticism holds that the basic theme of the play, particularly as it applies to Prince Hal, is his maturation from the publicly irresponsible youth of act one to the chivalrous prince of act five.

Dover Wilson notes that "Shakespeare inherited from the chroniclers a sudden conversion for Hal of an almost miraculous kind," and gives the theme of 1 Henry IV as Hal's choice "between Vanity and

¹As observed by Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 310.
Government, taking the latter in its accepted Tudor meaning, which includes Chivalry or prowess in the field." He amplifies this point when he observes that "if Hal had sinned, it was not against God, but against Chivalry," listing Justice, the King, and the interests of the crown as also sinned-against, but emphasizing elsewhere that "we may label Part I the Return to Chivalry." Tillyard, although he "does not see the Prince altogether as [Wilson] does" (he places more importance upon Hal as the well-rounded Elizabethan gentleman), is in overall agreement with Wilson as to the centrality of Hal's character development to an understanding of Part One.3

In summing up the critical situation to 1948, J.F. Danby writes:

It is admitted, with audiences from Shakespeare's day to ours and with critics from Hazlitt to Bradley, that Falstaff walks off with both parts of Henry IV. It is admitted too, with critics up to and including Coleridge, and with Dr. Tillyard and Prof. Dover Wilson of recent commentators, that Shakespeare's intention was to make Hal the real hero of both parts.4

Since Danby's observations were made, no commentator has come forward to render them obsolete. David Berkeley and Donald Eidson (1968) arrive at the same destination as do Dover Wilson and Tillyard, although via a different path, and in arguing that the main theme of Henry IV is "politic concealment and exhibition of seminally transmitted virtue," they cite Malory three times.5

How do Hal's actions on the battlefield, particularly the manner in which he engages his enemy in single combat, illustrate this idea?

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2J. Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 17, 24, 64, 69.

3Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 49.


Hal himself is explicit on this point, for in justifying his behavior to the King he predicts that he will prove his honor by defeating Hotspur:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head,  
And in the closing of some glorious day  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son,  
When I will wear a garment all of blood,  
And stain my favors in a bloody mask . . .  

Percy is but my factor, good my lord,  
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf.

(3.2.132-148)

Later, at Shrewsbury, Hal, in a manner which clearly displays that the "truant" to chivalry is a truant no more, offers to meet Hotspur in single combat "to save the blood on either side":

The Prince of Wales doth join with all the world  
In praise of Henry Percy. By my hopes,  
This present enterprise set off his head,  
I do not think a braver gentleman,  
More active, valiant or more valiant, young,  
More daring or more bold, is now alive  
To grace this latter age with noble deeds.  
For my part, I may speak it to my shame,  
I have a truant been to chivalry,  
And so I hear he doth account me too.  
Yet this before my father's Majesty:  
I am content that he shall take the odds  
Of his great name and estimation,  
And will, to save the blood on either side,  
Try fortune with him in a single fight.

(5.1.86-100)

Dover Wilson describes "the generosity of spirit" seen in this challenge as "the attitude of Malory's Lancelot towards his fellow knights."6 The challenge bears careful consideration, for it reveals a great deal about how Shakespeare wishes Hal to be seen by the audience: of all the actions of Hal and Talbot—the two English military heroes in Shakespeare—this is the most reminiscent of the heroes of chivalric

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romance. Dover Wilson speaks of Lancelot; for others the challenge might evoke images of Roland's single combat against the giant Ferracuté in the "Pseudo-Turpin." 7

The most striking similarities, however, between this incident and a comparable one in chivalric romance are to be found in two works definitely known to Shakespeare: John Lydgate's Troy Book, and Caxton's translation of Le Fevre's Troy epic entitled The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troy. 8 As Caxton tells it, Hector visits the Grecian camp during a truce and makes an offer of single combat to Achilles which would decide the outcome of the war:

And yf hit happen that thou vaynquysshe me, that my frendes and I shall be bannysshid oute of this royame and we shalle leve hit unto the Grekes. And thereof I shal leve good plegge. And herein thou mayste prouffite to many other that may renne in grete danger yf they haunte the battayll. And yf hit happen that I vanquysshe the, make that alle they of this ooste departe hens and suffre us to lyve in pees. 9

Priam is willing to risk his son, but Agamemnon and the other Greek kings, with some similarity to the actions of Worcester and Vernon, make sure that the combat does not occur. As Shakespeare, it will be seen, makes use of the very same incident in Troilus and Cressida, it could well have been in his mind while writing 1 Henry IV, casting some doubt upon the assertion of Gerard H. Cox, made in a 1985 essay devoted


9Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:202. The episode is essentially the same in Lydgate.
largely to Hal's challenge, that "no known source" exists for it. If Shakespeare is indeed alluding to Lydgate/Caxton, he draws a parallel between Hal and another of the great chivalric models, perhaps the greatest in that, as has been observed above, medieval chivalry looked to Troy for exemplars of the code. That the Elizabethans had this perception is demonstrated, for example, by the Earl of Warwick's description of his men during their heroic (and doomed) defense of Le Havre in 1562-3: "they fight like Hectors."

It would appear, especially to the modern reader, that the idea of a war being decided by single combat of two champions is purely the stuff of fictional romance, and to an extent this is correct; in all of Froissart, Hall, Holinshed, and Monstrelet, no such combat takes place. It is important to note, however, that princes did frequently issue such challenges, for in so doing they maintained a notion central to the code of chivalry: that war was no more than an extension of a private quarrel, which could then be resolved by single combat, the theatre of war becoming, in turn, an extension of the High Court of Chivalry.

Johann Huizinga, calling such challenges a "peculiar form of political advertisement," notes:

The idea of having political differences settled by single combat between the two princes concerned was a logical consequence of the

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11Black, 54.

12See below, 258-60, for discussion of tournament combats held during sieges.
conception still prevailing as if political disputes were nothing but a "quarrel" in the juristic sense of the word.  

Holinshed records an offer by Philip of France to settle his differences with Richard I of England by single combat of designated champions; Richard countered by insisting that the two kings themselves participate, and the matter was quickly dropped. Some similar instances in the late medieval period are: (1) Richard II of England and his uncles offered combat to Charles VI of France and his uncles, (2) Louis of Orleans offered to fight Henry IV of England, and (3) in 1425 the Duke of Burgundy challenged Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, making an elaborate show of training for the combat which did not take place. Twenty years later he issued a similar challenge.

Twice Henry V offered single combat: once to the Dauphin before marching on Agincourt, and once to Philip the Good of Burgundy.

It may well be, as Cox, citing Huizinga, observes, that such challenges were only offered when the challenger knew nothing would come of it, but the evidence is nevertheless incontestable that Hal's offer at Shrewsbury did have its real counterparts, which occurred in Elizabethan times as well: in 1590 Henri IV of France challenged the Duc de Mayenne, and Essex, on the expedition to Portugal led by Drake and Sir John Norreys in 1589, offered single combat to the Spanish commander of Corunna. An argument may be offered, then, that Shakespeare is showing a step in Hal's attainment of chivalry by accurately

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13J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1924), 84.

14Holinshed 2:263.

15Cox, 134.

16Huizinga, 84-86; Benson, 190-91; Black, 358.
drawing on the genuine practice of the chivalrous prince in war, which is in accord with Cox's main thesis: "the challenge serves as a pageant for Hal in which he can demonstrate to all on stage that he has reformed."17

It has been previously noted that in 2 and 3 Henry VI, which are earlier in the canon but later in the story, the conduct of the English knights is far removed from that of 1 Henry VI, and the savagery of the fighting is suggested by the vituperative exchange during the parley preceding the First Battle of St Albans (2H6. 5.1), where the word "traitor" or "treason" is used no less than nine times. In two parleys (5.3. and 5.1) between the royal faction and the Percies, however, "traitor" or "treason" is not heard. In 4.3, Blunt does say that the rebels "stand against anointed majesty" (4.3.40) but his overall demeanor in the scene is conciliatory. While deploiring the breaking of civil peace, he wants to know the nature of the Percies' grievances:

... The King hath sent to know
The nature of your griefs, and whereupon
You conjure from the breast of civil peace
Such bold hostility. ...

(4.3.41-44)

Such an approach would be totally out of place in 5.1 of 2 Henry VI.

In 5.1. of 1 Henry IV the King, unless he is being devious, shows the same attitude as that taken by his ambassador in 4.3. Although he does use the word "rebellion" (5.1.74), as does Falstaff before Hal quickly quietens him (5.1.28), it would appear that a direct charge of treason is something the King and Hal are consciously avoiding, and Hal's challenge is noteworthy in that it offers only praise for Hotspur.

The King's refusal to allow the single combat--

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17 Cox, 132.
And, Prince of Wales, so dare we venture thee,
Albeit considerations infinite
Do make against it . . .

(5.1.101-03)

--requires some comment. Cox gives three "considerations" as among Shakespeare's infinite: Hal might lose, it's not the way battles are fought, and the audience's knowledge of history would require Hotspur to be killed in battle. As indicated by examples given above, history shows Cox's second reason to be valid; the first and third, however, are contradictory: while it is possible that in dramatic terms the King refuses because he is afraid Hal will lose the single combat and his father's crown along with it, if attention must be paid to historical accuracy, this factor becomes irrelevant.

I believe Cox misses some of the subtleties of the episode, as the possibility of Hal's victory is as strong an impetus for the King's refusal as the possibility of his defeat. This becomes apparent when the remainder of the King's speech is considered:

... No, good Worcester, no,
We love our people well, even those we love
That are misled upon your cousin's part,
And will they take the offer of our grace,
Both he and they, and you, yea, every man
Shall be my friend again and I'll be his.

(5.1.103-08)

Contrary to the opinion of A.E. Morgan, there is no break in the King's train of thought between "considerations infinite do make against it" and "no, good Worcester no;" he is trying to avoid a battle, and is prepared to take the extraordinary step of forgiving the rebels if they lay down their arms. Should Hal and Hotspur engage in single combat, the battle—a rebellion—would, in a legal sense, have

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18 Cox, 132.

occurred, and forgiving those engaged in armed rebellion against the crown would be a proposition impossible to entertain. While spectators would require a fairly sophisticated knowledge of chivalric law to appreciate such a point in performance, it will be argued in discussion of the single combat in King Lear and the aborted trial of Richard II that Shakespeare does indeed expect this of his audience.\(^\text{20}\)

Given the later events at Gaultree Forest (2H4. 4.2), Worcester and Vernon are perhaps justified in misrepresenting the King's offer, telling Hotspur and Douglas that the battle is imminent (5.2.1-30). Only then does this exchange occur:

WOR. The Prince of Wales stepp'd before the king
And, Nephew, challeng'd you to single fight.

HOT. O would the quarrel lay upon our heads,
And that no man might draw short breath to-day
But I and Harry Monmouth! Tell me, tell me,
How show'd his tasking? seem'd it in contempt?

(5.2.46-51)

Hotspur's question (11. 49-50) is one that arouses great sympathy for him; the repeated "tell me," followed by two very short questions, serves to accentuate the impetuosity of Hotspur's youth, of which Harry is soon to "rob" him (5.4.77). It is a commonplace to observe that although Hal and Hotspur were in fact both present at Shrewsbury, they were not close to being contemporaries;\(^\text{21}\) indeed, it is probably the best known of all Shakespeare's revisions of historical chronology.

\(^{20}\)See below, 319-27.

Now, in the final moments before his encounter with the Prince, a character obsessed with personal honor has a moment of pathetic doubt of his worthiness to engage the Prince of Wales in combat as a brother in arms. Vernon's answer is a tribute not only to Hal's modesty (5.2.52), but as it refers back to Hal's generous praise of Hotspur, it also reflects upon Hotspur's worth: "He gave you all the duties of a man" (5.2.55).

One of the reasons, perhaps the main reason, for Shakespeare's inventing this episode of the challenge to single combat is to make the actual swordfight of Hal and Hotspur in 5.4 appear not simply as a matter of kill-or-be-killed between enemies in war, but as a chivalrous test of valor and martial prowess between two worthy opponents. Dover Wilson is correct in observing that the challenge speaks of a Lancelot's attitude to his fellow knights. It speaks of more than this, however; it is an allusion to Lancelot's engaging a fellow knight in combat, and in Malory, with rare exception, this does not occur in pitched battle, but in the tournament lists, first on horseback, and then on foot with sword and shield.

Further to the idea of making the ensuing fights have the character of a tournament, the number of casualties at Shrewsbury is not emphasized in the play. Except for Hal's original offer to "save the blood on either side," and Falstaff's comment that his company of "ragamuffins" has been nearly wiped out, thanks to him (5.3.36-38), there is little indication that many knights or many common soldiers will die at Shrewsbury. Falstaff's non-fight with Douglas, coming at the same time as Hal's battle with Hotspur, may also be seen in contrast to the pathos of Henry VI's dial speech and the father that has killed his son, which come directly after the encounter between Richard and Young Clifford (3H6. 2.4-5).
The Battle of Shrewsbury, fought 21 July 1403, was nothing like the series of honorable personal combats which are seen in 1 Henry IV. Even allowing for the inevitable exaggeration that chroniclers of this period are noted for, Holinshed's account is one of fearsome slaughter:

There died in all upon the kings side sixteen hundred, and four thousand were greevouslie wounded. On the contrarie side were slaine, beside the Lord Persie, the most part of the knights and esquiers of the countie of Chester, to the number of two hundred, besides yeomen and footmen: in all there died of those that fought on the Persies side, about five thousand.22

It is also noteworthy that Shrewsbury, according to Charles Oman, was "the first pitched battle between Englishmen since the bowman had become the great power in war,"23 but Shakespeare, as he does in his depiction of Agincourt, ignores this fact completely. Where Shakespeare's Shrewsbury differs sharply from his Agincourt, however, is that in the former our perception of the role of the common soldier is reduced still further by the absence of any oration by either leader to encourage his troops. The King offers only three lines--

Hence therefore, every leader to his charge,
For on their answer will we set on them,
And God befriend us as our cause is just!

(5.1.118-20)

--while Hotspur has four:

Arm, arm with speed! and, fellows, soldiers, friends,
Better consider what you have to do
Than I, that have not well the gift of tongue,
Can lift your blood up with persuasion.

(5.2.75-78)

The Battle--Douglas and Blunt

For the same reasons as presented in discussion of Henry VI, this initial encounter would most probably have been fought, in

22Holinshed, 3:26
23Oman, 2:374-75.
Shakespeare's time, with bastard-sword or sword and target, but a speculation might be made regarding the weaponry of the hired men portraying Douglas's soldiers. Although Douglas has a sword—"Now by my sword, I will kill all his coats" (5.3.26)—there are historical references, which Shakespeare would have seen, to the Scottish predilection for the battle-axe. In Froissart's account of the Battle of Otterburn, fifteen years before Shrewsbury, this (Sir Archibald) Douglas's grandfather, Sir James Douglas, was killed while fighting the Percies "with a good axe in his handes." Indeed, it is noted of all of the Scots that "they rather beare axes, wherwith they gyve great strokes," and in another encounter during the same battle, a Scottish and English knight are described fighting "one with an axe, the other with a swerde."24

Another (minor) point about Douglas might be added here: although Shakespeare makes no mention of it, Sir Archibald Douglas lost an eye at Homildon,25 which presents an interesting opportunity to the modern director; the image of a a warrior with a patch over one eye fiercely wielding—if the actor could manage it—a two-hand sword is a potentially powerful one. Although this passage from Froissart concerns the father of the Douglas who fought at Homildon and Shrewsbury, it is nevertheless of interest, as it affords a vivid picture of a Scottish warrior—the bastard son of the axe-wielding Sir James—in action with the two-hand sword:

Sir Archambalt Duglas was a mighty knight and a bygge, and sore feared of his enemyes: whan it came to the aprochynge, he lyght a foote, and had in his handes a longe swerd, whereof the blade was

24Froissart, Thirde and Fourthe Boke, fo. C.lix r., C.lvi v., C.lxi v.

two els of length; it was too hevy for any other man lyghty to lift up fro the erthe, but for him it was lyght ynow, and he gave therwith suche strokes, that whomesoever he hytte full, wente to the erthe.26

Whatever the weaponry and appearance of Douglas, this combat has the important function of establishing the superior battlefield conduct of both him and the "gallant knight" (5.3.20), Sir Walter Blunt. Admiration for Blunt is aroused by his forthright manner when Shakespeare, unhistorically, has him serve as embassy to the rebels in 4.3, and by Hotspur's stated wish that Blunt were on the other side:

Welcome, Sir Walter Blunt; and would to God
You were of our determination!
Some of us love you well, and even those some
Envy your great deservings and good name,
Because you are not of our quality,
But stand against us like an enemy.

(4.3.32-37)

Blunt's patient silence during Hotspur's long speech of grievances against the King, which he interrupts only once—"Tut, I came not to hear this" (4.3.89)—also speaks of his worth as the King's representative, as does his very restrained reply, "Shall I return this answer to the King?" (4.3.106).

It is clear that we should admire Blunt for risking, and losing, his life in wearing the King's colors. The derivation of the episode is somewhat complicated. As Holinshed tells the story,

... they [the rebels] gave such a violent onset upon them that stood about the King's standard-bearer, Sir Walter Blunt, and overthrowing the standard, they made slaughter of all those that stood about it; as the earle of Stafford, that daie made by the King constable of all the realme.27

In the next paragraph, however, Holinshed reads

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26Froissart, First Volum, fo. CC.vi, v. & r.

Douglas strake him [the King] downe, & at that instant slue Sir Walter Blunt, and three other, appareled in the kings suite ..

As A.R. Humphreys notes, citing 2 Henry IV 1.1.16-17, there were in fact two Blunts, and Shakespeare took the action from Daniel:28

_Heroicall Courageous Blunt a raid_  
In habit like as was the king attirde  
And deemed for him, excused that fate with his,  
For he had what his Lord did hardly misse.

Daniel goes on to say

_Another of that forward name and race_  
_In that hotte work his valiant life bestowes;_  
_Who bare the standard of the king that day . . ._.

and then mentions Stafford and Shorley (Shirley in Shakespeare) as also among the fallen, but without offering any details as to manner of their deaths:

_Great Stafford thy high constable lies dead,  
With Shorley, Clifton, Gawsell, Calverly  
And many more . . ._.

Shakespeare appears to combine the two Blunts into one character in 1 Henry IV, and then to forget he has done so in 2 Henry IV, while the inclusion of Stafford in the list of decoys killed by Douglas is his own invention. Douglas, thinking he is challenging the king, says to Blunt:

_The Lord of Stafford dear to-day hath bought_  
_Thy likeness . . ._.

Later, when Hal challenges Douglas, he refers to Stafford--

_... The spirits_  
_Of valiant Shirley, Stafford, Blunt are in my arms_  

--although it is not explicit that Stafford was killed while

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28Humphreys, ed., 1 Henry IV, 151. The quotations from Daniel’s Civil Wars which follow are from the 1595 edition, and are found in A.R. Grosart, ed., The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel, 4 vols. (printed for private circulation only, 1885), 2:154-55.
impersonating the king, it is likely in that Douglas has been single-mindedly seeking the King out.

It is strange that Hal gives no indication of having seen Blunt's body, a body appareled as his father, when he enters to ask Falstaff for the loan of a sword. The best way of avoiding this apparent inconsistency in staging is to have Falstaff, during his speech (5.3.30-39), move away from Blunt after recognizing him. On the large Shakespearean stage, this could be easily accomplished.

**Falstaff's Pistol-Case**

The famous incident in which Hal discovers a bottle of sack instead of a pistol in Falstaff's case presents a problem in interpretation: if, as has been argued, Shakespeare gives an accurate picture of fifteenth-century warfare in the first and second tetralogies, how is this consistent with the presence of a pistol case, as wheel-lock pistols were not known in England at that time?29 The inconsistency arises because at Shrewsbury the two separate elements of the theme of 1 Henry IV are brought together for the first time; to this point in the play, Hal's involvement with the political and military events of the time has been a part of Shakespeare's serious attempt to depict a late medieval setting, but the Falstaff scenes in both parts of Henry IV are decidedly Elizabethan; indeed this is one of their chief attractions. In this sense, Henry IV is written in two distinct historical periods, and the fact that Shakespeare succeeds in this mode without drawing attention to its incongruity is one of the great achievements of the two plays. As Shrewsbury is the only episode over ten acts in which the two historical periods meet, some rough

29See above, 68.
edges in the join are inevitable, and while it will simply not do to pass over the incident of the pistol-case as too insignificant to be noticed in performance, the fact that it is the only such obvious incongruity is a pointer to Shakespeare's command of an extraordinary dramaturgical technique. Falstaff's pistol-case, and the other very Elizabethan features of the military episodes involving him, such as the muster in 2 Henry IV (3.2), must not be taken as an indicator that the swordfighting sequences of 1 Henry IV would be of an Elizabethan, rather than chivalric, flavor.

Douglas, The King, Hal, and Falstaff

For the beginning of 5.4, both Q and F show, except for slight variations in spelling and syntax, "Alarum, excursions, Enter the King, the Prince, Lord John of Lancaster, Earl of Westmoreland" (5.4.0SD). In this sequence, the excursions would have to be extensive, for a great deal has happened offstage since Hal's exit at 5.3.56. He has been wounded, and has had the opportunity to learn that Shirley, Stafford, and Blunt are dead; he also needs to have located a sword. Here is another instance, then, in which excursions might include infantry fighting, in order to establish more convincingly a passage of time between scenes; perhaps an example of the type of fighting, with "four swords and bucklers," to which Sidney might have objected were he alive to see it. There would also have to be some action to include the removal of Blunt's body by the standard-bearers.

After the brief (twenty-four lines) sequence in which commanders

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30Cf. Wart's musket drill, Justice Shallow's description of "a little quiver fellow" he knew when he was in "Arthur's show," and the way the fellow handled his caliver (2H4. 3.2.291-306). The setting of the episode is purely Elizabethan. The joining of the political and comic plots of 1 Henry IV at Shrewsbury is noted by Axel Clark, "The Battle of Shrewsbury," Critical Review 15: (1972): 30.
of the King's forces go off in various directions to renew the fight. Douglas enters to challenge the king, who is momentarily alone, except possibly for standard bearers or other supernumeraries. The stage direction reads "They fight; the King being in danger, enter Prince of Wales" (5.4.38.SD).

At last Hal is to be tested on the field of battle; this might be seen as the appropriate place, then, to examine Shakespeare's use of his sources in portraying Hal's bouts with Douglas and Hotspur. Although these individual combats are unhistorical, Holinshed relates that the sixteen-year-old Prince fought bravely at Shrewsbury, and was wounded:

The prince that daie holpe his father like a lustie young gentleman; for although he was hurt in the face with an arrow, so that diverse noble men, that were about him, would have conveyed him foorth of the field, yet he would not suffer them to so doo.31

In Shakespeare, the incident is introduced by the King's

Harry, withdraw thyself, thou bleedest too much. (5.4.2)

It has been noted above that an important feature of the actual Battle of Shrewsbury was the longbow, a point excluded by Shakespeare. In this scene, there is no mention of an arrow, and a wound, which Hal dismisses as a "shallow scratch" (5.4.11) but which "bleeds too much" according to the King (5.4.2), implies that it was received in a more "knightly" fashion, i.e. in a swordfight. Hal's valor is even greater, then, in that, as Malory's and Spenser's knights so often do, he continues to fight after being wounded, rescuing his father by taking on Douglas only moments after refusing to retire from the field.

As Humphreys notes, Holinshed "describes the King's falling before Douglas, his rising again, and the slaying of Hotspur in a general

31Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 4:191.
mêlée." Shakespeare, however, draws his portrayal of events, as he does the general Hal-Hotspur relationship, from Daniel, who "credits the Prince with the King's rescue, and with encountering Hotspur."

Bullough takes the meaning of the rescue a step further, and argues that Shakespeare "uses the incident to prove (as against the suggestion in Famous Victories) that the Prince never desired his father's death. Both poets [Daniel and Shakespeare] use the young man's heroism in battle as an earnest of his future wondrous actions."32

With the King "in danger," Hal's rescue of him would not be undertaken by his approaching Douglas from behind and attacking him unexpectedly. Instead, in chivalric fashion, he calls out to Douglas:

Hold up thy head, vile Scot, or thou art like
Never to hold it up again! The spirits
Of valiant Shirley, Stafford, Blunt, are in my arms.
It is the Prince of Wales that threatens thee,
Who never promises but he means to pay.

They fight. Douglas flies.

(5.4.39-43)

Once again the challenge is courteous. "Vile," in Shakespeare, does not always mean despicable, but may refer only to the fact that Douglas is not of noble birth. Hal also uses the word in this sense in Henry V, although Olivier substituted Q's "base" in the film:

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition . . .

(4.3.61-63)

What are we to make of Douglas's flight, in the light of Hal's subsequent praise for his valor? G.M. Pinciss relates the incident to the thematic comparison between Hotspur and Hal. He argues that Hotspur represents the "old honor" and Hal the "new courtesy" of the

32Humphreys, ed., 1 Henry IV, 156; Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 4:166.
Renaissance gentleman, giving the explicit view that it is Hotspur who exemplifies the medieval code of chivalry, "a hero in a tale by Malory," while Hal, in approving of flight "when one is outnumbered or outclassed," is demonstrating different values, those of Castiglione's Courtier:

... it is behoefeful both for himselfe and for his friends, that he have a foresight in the quarrels and controversies that may happen ... Neither let him runne rashly to these combats ... for beside the great daunger that is in the doubtful lot, he that goeth headlong to these thinges deserveth great blame.33

This view is difficult to accept. Pinciss is extremely selective in choosing evidence to support his view that the opposition of Hotspur and Hal as one of Hotspur's honor against Hal's courtesy, a virtue "especially appropriate for a Renaissance prince."34

First, as has been argued, the idea that Castiglione is anti- or non-chivalric is fallacious.35 In order to prove his point, Pinciss takes Castiglione's advice out of context, for Castiglione is advising his courtier to avoid entering rashly into formal quarrels, quite a different matter from avoiding a fight on the battlefield. Furthermore, Pinciss, without indicating such, omits two key phrases from the passage, significantly altering its meaning. The passage, shown above as it appears in Pinciss' essay, actually reads:

... for beside the great daunger that is in the doubtful lot, he that goeth headlong to these thinges, and without urgent cause,


34Pinciss, 85.

35See above, 102-03.
deserveth great blame, although his chaunce bee good.\textsuperscript{36}

Castiglione, then, is not saying that the better part of valor is discretion, but quite the opposite: the courtier should avoid quarrels unless the cause is just, even if he expects to win the combat, and in the next paragraph Castiglione writes that if one \textit{must} fight, he should "alwaies shew a readinesse and stomacke, and not as some doe, passe the matter in arguing and points." This is a far cry from running away on the battlefield if you are "outclassed." Castiglione's advice for the courtier at war is to be adept at all weapons, be an expert horseman, "to have the arte of swimming, to leape, to runne, to cast the stone," and to separate himself from the main body of troops, if possible, so that his genuine deeds of valor might be noticed.\textsuperscript{37}

Castiglione's regard for the Courtier as soldier is also illustrated by his attitude to Alexander the Great. Unlike Erasmus, who excoriated him as a "madman," Castiglione praises Alexander as proof of the virtues of Aristotelian pedagogy and as a great man who brought "good customs to those he overcame,"\textsuperscript{38} while Sir William Sagar credits Alexander with the very origins of the code of chivalry:

It is affirmed by some writers that Alexander the Great with the advice of his learned tutor Aristotle, resolved to bestow upon some persons as performed any notable service in the warres, certaine honours and advancements, in token of their extraordinary virtue and notable merit: and therefore he gave unto some badges, unto

\textsuperscript{36}Castiglione, trans. Hoby, 40. Hoby's translation is correct. The original Italian reads "oltre al gran pericolo che la dubiosa sorte seco porta, chi in tai cose precipitosamente e senza ur gente causa incorre, merita grandissimo biasimo, avenga che ben gli succeda." Castiglione, \textit{Il Cortegiano}, 46.

\textsuperscript{37}Castiglione, trans. Hoby, 40-42, 95-96.

\textsuperscript{38}Castiglione, trans. Hoby, 289-90. See also Woodhouse, 138, 143-44, 163.
some chaines, unto some immunities, or some such other demonstration of valor and honour.\textsuperscript{39}

Shakespeare shows his affinity with Castiglione and Elizabeth's Carter King of Arms by Henry V's

\begin{quote}
On, on, you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

(H5. 3.1.17-21)

It is possible that some of the confusion regarding Douglas's apparent cowardice is the use of the word "flies," a word whose meaning in Shakespeare is not totally unambiguous, in the stage direction. It is, indeed, the third person singular of "fly" and "flee,"\textsuperscript{41} but in other Shakespearean directions, in this or a variant form, "flies" does not always imply running away in a cowardly fashion: in The Taming of the Shrew Kate "flies" after Bianca (2.1.29.SD). There is an imputation of cowardice in the Cymbeline battle, when the Britons "fly" (5.2.10.SD), but no such implication when Young Clifford, fighting Richard in 3 Henry VI, "flies" (2.4.11.SD), as he does so only after Warwick joins the fight, much to Richard's annoyance, making it two against one.

By referring to being "outnumbered" and "outclassed" in the same phrase, Pinciss seems to equate one with the other, hence incorrectly combining two distinct contingencies. Indeed, he refers to Henry V and notes that before Agincourt, Henry, like Hotspur in 1 Henry IV,

\textsuperscript{39}Segar, 53.

\textsuperscript{40}Cf. Hamlet: "To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bunghole?" (5.1.202-03). That Shakespeare chooses Alexander's "noble dust" as a prime example of mutability does not make him the less heroic, but, I believe, quite the reverse.

\textsuperscript{41}"Flee" appears only once in Shakespeare (LLL. 3.1.65).
argues "that the greater glory is gained by being outnumbered." This inconsistency, which is a glaring one in that we are dealing with the same character, is explained away as Shakespeare being "not everywhere consistent." Finally, Pinciss fails to mention the many other references to honor and chivalry by Hal, e.g. his promise to redeem his honor by fighting Hotspur.

An army, such as Talbot's at Bordeaux or Hal's at Agincourt, being outnumbered in a battle which it cannot avoid, is simply not the same as one knight withdrawing from an uneven personal combat. This point appears to have eluded every commentator on the episode except Seymour V. Connor in 1948, who remarks: "Douglas' sudden flight off stage from the Prince would be more natural if the duel [sic] becomes two-on-one." There is no reason to assume that the King is incapacitated when Hal comes to his rescue; the stage direction only has him "in danger." Once Hal removes that immediate danger, and the King has a moment or two to recover, then Douglas would see that his only alternative is to withdraw; while it is apparent to the spectator that Hal would never be part of an uneven fight, and would urge the King away, this would not necessarily be apparent to Douglas, and therefore no dishonor is implied in his withdrawal.

After Douglas's exit, the brief conversation between the King and Hal reinforces the ideas established by the fight itself—Hal has begun to redeem his honor (5.4.48), and the rumor that Hal desires his father's death is false (5.4.51-57). The King exits to aid Sir Nicholas Gawsey (5.4.58), and Hotspur immediately enters to engage Hal

42Pinciss, 80.

in single combat.

**Hal and Hotspur**

The pre-fight challenge is long—sixteen lines—and, like Hal's offer of single combat in 5.1, it evokes images of the tourney rather than the battlefield. It should be noted that the first thing Hal and Hotspur do is identify themselves:

HOT. If I mistake not, thou art Harry Monmouth.

PRINCE. Thou speakest as if I would deny my name.

HOT. My name is Harry Percy.

PRINCE. Why, then I see
   A very valiant rebel of the name.
   I am the Prince of Wales . . .

(5.4.59-63)

In practice, Hotspur would have had no difficulty recognizing Hal, even though it would appear that they have never met, as the Prince of Wales' banner would serve as identification. This "Hal" could be a double, of course; indeed, the effectiveness of such doubles relies upon the enemy's recognition of the royal standard, but Hal's previous challenge to single combat makes it unlikely that Hotspur would question Hal's authenticity. Such mutual announcements of identity are more the stuff of the tourney as so often occurs in Malory, in which the knight's helmet is closed, keeping his identity a secret until he wishes to reveal it. Although, as has been noted above, a closed helmet on the stage would have been impractical if the actors had to speak, by making an allusion to the closed-helmet jousts of the romances Shakespeare further imbues this combat with the qualities of such combats.

The remainder of the exchange is without a seriously pejorative
term, nor is there any suggestion of treason. Hal speaks only of his desire for the honor of defeating his rival in combat:

... and think not, Percy,
To share with me in glory any more.
Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,
Nor can one England brook a double reign
Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.

(5.4.63-67)

I would argue that Hal's mention of the "double reign" is free from any suggestion of Hotspur himself being a rival to the throne, but Shakespeare's ingeniously making it apparent that this must be, after all, a battle to the death, by having Hotspur, Implicity if not explicitly in his response, remind the audience of the political realities inherent in the combat:

Nor shall it, Harry, for the hour is come
To end the one of us ...

(5.4.68-69)

There is something triumphant in Hotspur addressing the Prince as "Harry"; it proclaims their equality not in descent, but in the central concern of this particular scene, which is knightly prowess.

The ensuing moments, in which Falstaff appears at the moment Hal and Hotspur begin fighting, are as follows in Q:

HOT. I can no longer brooke thy vanities.

They fight. Enter Falstaffe.

FALST. Well said Hall, to it Hall. Nay you shall find no boyes play here I can tell you.

Enter Douglas, he figheth with Falstaffe, he fals down as if he were dead, the Prince killeth Percy.

44 I do not agree with Derek Cohen, who writes that this challenge is "a provocative ritual of boasting in which each of the combatants--almost as if to rediscover the basis of his hatred for the other--recalls the very spirit of his own animosity." This is the same Hal who joined "with all the world / In praise of Henry Percy (5.1.86-87). Derek Cohen, "The Rite of Violence in '1 Henry IV'," Shakespeare Survey 38 (1985): 81.
F is the same except for this variation in placement:

HOT. I can no longer brooke thy vanities. Fight.

Enter Falstaff.

If one is to follow the stage directions as printed, then Hal and Hotspur begin fighting immediately after the word "vanities," and Falstaff calls out his comments while they fight—"well said," in Elizabethan times, often meant "well done." Douglas's entrance would occur as Falstaff finishes his lines, and the two fights would proceed simultaneously. Falstaff is "killed," and one must assume Douglas exits, although no exit is indicated. Then, as Hammer's edition shows, Hal "mortal wounds" Hotspur: since Hotspur has a short speech in extremis, the "killeth" in Q and F must be taken in a more general sense, as is the case in King Lear (F), where Gloucester's servant speaks after being similarly "killed" by Regan (3.7.80).

The sequence presents an interesting challenge in staging in that two fights involving central characters occur at the same time. One also wonders why Douglas exits after his "battle" with Falstaff without any attempt to intervene in, or comment upon, the other fight. One possible solution is to have Falstaff give Douglas the impression that he might team up with Hal against Hotspur; Douglas could then engage Falstaff, more in a desire to draw him away than to kill or capture him, for until this point, Douglas's pursuit of King Henry has been single-minded.

The Falstaff-Douglas bout would be a brief one, simply because it is consistent with Falstaff's character to pretend being killed quickly so as not actually to be killed. With Falstaff supine on the stage,

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it would also be appropriate for Douglas to approach Hal and Hotspur momentarily, if only to emphasize, through gesture, that none of the three characters would be part of an uneven fight. The sequence could then serve to embellish the honorable conduct of Douglas; having just escaped from a potential two-against-one fight, he attacks Falstaff merely to keep him away from Hotspur, and once Falstaff is "dead," he does not attempt to join with Hotspur against Hal, but leaves them to continue his own search for the King. If Hal is momentarily aware of Douglas's presence, then he has personally witnessed Douglas's "valors shown upon our crests to-day" (5.5.29).

As to the character of the Douglas-Falstaff bout, it should be emphasized that it is not necessarily comic, nor should Falstaff's faint be obvious. First, it would make Douglas appear inappropriately foolish and gullible, but more importantly, Hal's speech over Falstaff's "body" is made more tender if not only he, but the audience, believes that Falstaff is actually dead. Falstaff's awakening is then rendered all the more humorous if it is a genuine surprise to the spectators--it is most important to remember that Shakespeare's audience did not study this play at school, nor had it seen, at least for the initial performances of Henry IV, its sequel. Therefore the spectators of 1597 would have had no reason to think Falstaff's death to be a charade, and, it might be assumed, would have been empathically involved in his fight with Douglas, saddened, along with Hal, when seeing the corpulent knight apparently slain, and then all the more delighted when Falstaff, as Q reads, "riseth up."

It has already been argued that the military swordfighting between principal characters in the first tetralogy, indeed all swordfighting
in Shakespeare's plays, would have been spectacular in presentation. The encounter between the "great heart" (5.4.86) and the opponent he calls a "sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales" (1.3.230), no longer a "truant to chivalry" (5.1.94), would be no exception. Above all the combats in the two tetralogies, this is the one in which the audience's sympathies for the loser are greatest, even while realizing the inevitability of his defeat—to return for a moment to Pinciss' comparison of the supposed rival conceptions of honor held by Hal and Hotspur, I cannot see where it is essential to 1 Henry IV that Hal must be regarded as somehow morally superior to Hotspur, as the play most approaches tragedy if Hotspur's death is seen as the death of a man of admirable qualities whom history sacrifices in a battle of "two stars [that] keep not their motion in one sphere" (5.4.65). In modern productions, therefore, the staging of the fight should contain the drama of a titanic struggle between two opponents, either of whom would be unbeatable against any third party, but who are now playing a game of which a draw is not a possible outcome. To reinforce this, sword and target would be the most appropriate choice for use in this scene, as these were (and are) perceived to be the weapons of Lancelot, Arthur, and the Redcrosse Knight.

A struggle devoid of the personal hatred seen in 3 Henry VI is consistent with Hal's gracious epitaph over Percy's body. The fight over, Hal would, like Sir Guyon, "unlace" his helmet,\(^{46}\) and as ingeniously suggested by Herbert Hartman, remove from it the Prince of Wales's feathers and place them as "favors" to hide Hotspur's "mangled face" (5.4.96). Dover Wilson, in agreeing with Hartman that this would

\(^{46}\)Helmets are frequently "unlaced" in the Faerie Queene and in Malory.
be the appropriate stage business, brings the vision of Hal as the
Elizabethan courtier and as the embodiment of Roland into the same
sentence: "it is a gesture worthy of Sir Philip Sydney himself; the
crowning touch in the vision Shakespeare gives of his paladin Prince,
brave as a lion, tender as a woman." 47

The Conclusion of 1 Henry IV

In the brief episodes of the play that occur after the battle, Hal
completes the picture of "the trifler ... roused into the hero," as
Dr. Johnson describes him. 48 When Falstaff, at the close of 5.4,
claims to have killed Hotspur, Hal replies with

For my part, if a lie may do thee grace,
I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have.

(5.4.156-57)

Tillyard is correct in asserting that Hal is displaying another of
Castiglione's desirable traits of the Courtier: sprezzatura, a word
extremely difficult to translate into English. Tillyard gives an
approximate meaning of "nonchalance," which is adequate if one insists
on a one-word definition, but if a longer explanation is permitted,
than something like "the ability to do things with an appearance of
effortless ease, or disinterest" is perhaps more accurate. Whatever
the best English terminology, Hal does indeed display such a quality;
he has proven himself to himself, and there is no need to boast before
his brother John, whom he also praises for his own efforts.

47 Herbert Hartman, "Prince Hal's 'Shewe of Zeale,'" Philological
Quarterly 15 (1936): 720-723. Dover Wilson, Fortunes of Falstaff, 66-
67. Vernon refers to Hal being "plumed" in his description of the
armored warrior (4.1.98).

48 Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson,
ed. Arthur Sherbo, 10 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958-
77), 7:523.
Tillyard notes that this episode is needed to set up Falstaff's bogus military reputation for 2 Henry IV, a view with which Humphreys displays basic agreement when he says that Coleville's surrender is "the result of Falstaff's Shrewsbury renown." While this is a reasonable assumption, I believe that there must be more to the sequence than a contrivance facilitating a minor episode in the later play which could easily be established otherwise. There are several mentions of Falstaff's "service at Shrewsbury," but all are unspecific; more telling is that Hal himself never refers to Hotspur in either 2 Henry IV or Henry V, another facet to his sprezzatura.

Finally, after obtaining permission to dispose of Douglas as he wishes, Hal praises the "vile Scot" and releases him without ransom:

His valors shown upon our crests to-day
Hath taught us how to cherish such high deeds,
Even in the bosom of our adversaries.

(5.5.29-31)

As Dover Wilson notes:

The 'high courtesy' of this act, which would seem the very essence of chivalry to Elizabethans and can still win our admiration in an age of tanks and bombs, could only have occurred to a spirit of real nobility . . . for some six scenes [Hal] is brought continuously before us, either in person or through the report of other characters, so that we see more of him than we have ever seen before, and discover him not only to be a general who can win a battle and a soldier who can beat to the ground the best swordsman in the country, not only the soul of courtesy, whose chief thought is respect for the defeated and tenderness for the fallen, but a man so large-hearted and unmindful of self that, having wrested the laurels of the age from Hotspur's brow, he loses interest in the garland itself, is only amused when Falstaff, finding it lying in his way, sets it on his own head, and promises to aid and abet the fraud, as a favor to a friend and a jest to himself.50

In some respects, then, Shakespeare has created Hal in the mold of


50J. Dover Wilson, Fortunes of Falstaff, 68-70
Talbot, a military hero who, on the stage, exemplifies English chivalry by, amongst other things, the amount of swordfighting he does and the manner in which he executes it. There is also an important difference, which might be seen as the difference in quality of the two plays; in the first tetralogy the characters, Talbot included, are relatively static and unchanging, while in the second tetralogy, as Champion notes, the characters are more complex, and "this level of characterization in combination with the breadth of vision provoked by other components of the stage world results in Shakespeare's achievement of a powerfully complex historical perspective."51 Hal's deeds at Shrewsbury are not only, like Talbot's in France, a testament to valor, but are an integral part of the dynamic change in a developing central character. In this respect, Hal's fights are not just the stuff of exciting theatre, but fascinating drama.

Finally, a few comments might be made about touches which could be added in a modern production to make the swordfights as theatrically effective as possible. As has been noted above, the chronicles' descriptions of the weather conditions at some of the battles in the Wars of the Roses offer interesting opportunities for the director; in this case some added flavor could be given to the Battle of Shrewsbury with an unusual sound effect. In returning to Froissart's account of the Battle of Otterburn, we find this description of Sir James Douglas's forces' use of the hunting horn:

It is the usage of Scottes, that when they be thus assembled togyder in armes, the foote men bereth about their neckes hornes, in maner lyke hunters, some great some small, and of all sortes: so

that when they blowe all at ones, they make such a noyse, that it may herde nighe iiiii myles of.\textsuperscript{52}

While there is no reference to such horns in \textit{1 Henry IV}, the fact that Scottish forces are present offers to the modern director a justifiable opportunity to add an eerie and possibly quite frightening sound effect to an already powerful combat sequence, the only one in the second tetralogy in which one of England's great military heroes (to the Elizabethans) engages in onstage swordfighting.

\textbf{2 Henry IV and Henry V}

\textit{2 Henry IV} requires only a brief discussion, as there is no swordfighting in the play; indeed the very essence of the deception at Gaultree Forest is that the royal forces effect a bloodless victory. In excluding Hal from this episode, Shakespeare follows his sources, but were there other military actions during the latter part of Henry IV's reign in which Hal participated, and which would have allowed Shakespeare to once again show his martial prowess? A look at the chronicles reveals that had Shakespeare wished to show Hal in battle, it would have been necessary to show him fighting in the border struggles against the Welsh. As Hall writes,

But before his departure from Shrewsbury, he [Henry IV] not forgetting his enterprise against Owen Glendower, sent into Wales with a great army prince Henry his eldest sonne against the said Owen . . . when the prince with little labor and lesse losse, had tamed & brideled the furious rage of the wild and savage Welshemen, and lefte governors to rule and governe the countree, he returned to his father with great honor & no small praise.\textsuperscript{53}

David Powel's translation of Caradoc of Llancarfan's \textit{The History of Cambria}, published 1584, records the nature of rule of Hal's governors:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{52}Froissart, \textit{Thirde and Fourthe Boke}, fo. C.1xi r.

\textsuperscript{53}Hall, 31-32.
\end{quote}
For the King conceiving great hatred against them [the Welsh], shewed himselfe a manifest oppressor of all that nation, making rigorous lawes against them, whereby he toke in a maner all the liberties of subjects from them, prohibiting all Welshmen to purchase lands, or to be chosen or to be received citizens or burgesses in anie citie, borough, or market towne, or be received or accepted to anie office of Maior, Bailiffe, Chamberlaine, constable, or keeper of the gates, of the gaole, or to be of the councell of anie citie, borough, or market towne. And if anie suit happened betweene a Welshman and anie Englishman, it was by law ordained that the Englishman should not be convict, unless it were by the judgment of English Justices . . . also that all English burgesses that married Welshwomen should be dissfranchised of their liberties. No congregations or meetings in counsell was permitted to the Welshmen but by licence of the chiefe officers of the same Seigniories, and in the presence of the same officers. That no victualls or armour should be brought into Wales without the speciall licence of the king or his counsell. That no Welshman should have any castell, fortresse, or house defensive of his owne or of any other man to keepe. No Welshman to be made Justice, Chamberlaine, Chancellor, Treasuror, Sheriffe, Steward, Constable of castell, receiver, eschetor, coroner, nor chiefe forester, nor other officer, nor keeper of the records, nor lieutenant in anie of the said offices in no part of Wales, nor of the counsell of anie English lord, notwithstanding anie patent or licence made to the contrarie . . . there with other lawes both unreasonable (such as no prince among the heathen ever offered to his subjects) were ordained and severely executed against them . . . these lawes were not ordained for their reformation, but of meere purpose to worke their utter ruine and destruction. Which doth evidently appeare, in that they were forbidden to keepe their children at learning, or to put them to be apprentices to anie occupation.54

Shakespeare could also have read in Holinshed's Historie of Scotland how Henry V continued his repression of the Welsh:

We find in the Scotish chronicles, that this Henrie the fift, at his returning foorth of Fraunce, after his first journie thither (having in the same woone the towne of Harlfeet, & discomfited the whole power of France at Agincourt) was constreined to go against the Welshmen, and incountering with the Prince of Wales,55 was discomfited, and lost ten thousand of his men: but after this, he reinforced his power, and came againe into Wales, not ceasing till he had brought the Welshmen subject at his pleasure: but the English writers make no mention of anie such matter.56

Depicting Prince Hal as the subduer of the Welsh would hardly be

54Caradoc of Llancarfan, 387-88.

55Presumably the Welsh leader.

56Holinshed, 5:411.
consistent with the strongly pro-Welsh theme, with its Arthurian associations, which permeates the second tetralogy. In Henry V, the king is hardly the executor of harsh apartheid laws; instead he claims to be Welsh himself, doing so in conversation with Fluellen, a Welshman in whom there is, according to the King, "much care and valor" (4.1.84), and who is one of the play's most endearingly drawn characters:

KING. . . . I am Welsh, you know, good countryman.

FLU. All the water in Wye cannot wash your majesty's Welsh blood out of your body, I can tell you that. God bless it, and preserve it, as long as it pleases His grace, and His majesty too! (4.7.106-09)

As important as the thematic inconsistency which would become apparent if Hal were seen in bitter conflict with the Welsh is the fact that in terms of the development of his character, little would be gained by showing Hal fighting a second time; as Dover Wilson notes, once Hal's chivalric prowess in the field has been established, Shakespeare then proceeds to show Hal's acquisition of a fine sense of justice, "which is the theme of Part II."57

Sherman H. Hawkins expands this idea in an interesting fashion. He notes that Hal gradually displays the four Cardinal Virtues: Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and Prudence (Wisdom), with 1 Henry IV basically concerned with the former two, and 2 Henry IV with the latter. This observation in turn supports a supposition that Hal symbolizes the ideal Elizabethan, as the Queen herself, in a statement to Parliament, referred to the Cardinal Virtues as those she had always wished to attain.58

57Dover Wilson, Fortunes of Falstaff, 17.

58See Hawkins, 317.
Although there is no military swordfighting in Henry IV, Henry V is often assumed to be one of the plays in which Shakespeare most indulged the Elizabethans' taste for stage combat. This is understandable, since Shakespeare, with some alteration of chronology, makes the preparation for Agincourt, the battle itself, and its aftermath, the entire action of the play. In addition, the Chorus makes more than one so-called "apology" for the forthcoming attempt to portray an historic battle on stage, including his mention of

... four or five most vile and ragged foils,
Right ill dispos'd in brawl ridiculous.

(4 Cho. 50-51)

As a number of commentators have observed, however, the Chorus is being disingenuous. The apologies made here are just as necessary in many another Shakespearean play, and not only those written before Henry V: putting "two mighty monarchies" inside the Wooden O is, if anything, less demanding of the spectator's indulgence than the two mighty empires of Rome and Egypt.

Although some modern directors add onstage infantry fighting to a performance of Henry V, it is not required by the text, and indeed goes against the text's intention. The four scenes from 4.4 to 4.7 show activity away from the center of action, and the only meeting of opponents in the course of actual hostilities is Pistol's comic capture

of Monsieur Le Fer. Furthermore, Hal's courageous victory over Alençon in single combat is described but not shown. The overall impression gained is that, as Rose A. Zimbardo notes, "the battle scene is over before it has begun."  

Why does neither Hal nor any of the English nobles fight onstage? The answer might reside in the overall theme of the play, which I believe to be associated with the further development of Hal's character and his acquisition of kingly qualities. In 1 and 2 Henry IV Hal shows the personal traits of a great king; in Henry V it remains for him to display yet one more essential quality, that of being able to inspire the nation through leadership. In this sense, war is not the issue of the play, but the vehicle by which the issue is best brought forth. Terry Hands, who directed the 1975 Royal Shakespeare Company production of Henry V, makes this excellent point:

But war in this sense is less 'war-mongering' than Shakespeare's dramatic pretext for assembling the elements of Henry's nation—in one place, at one time, for examination. The metaphor serves to

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60 Martin Holmes argues that this is the "brawl ridiculous," 39.


contrast the imposed unity of medieval discipline with the agreed unity of interdependence. If he can unite his 'army,' he will unite his 'country.'

It is important, then, that Hal not be seen fighting, for his truly heroic act is in his inspiring of the greatly outnumbered English to victory. Whatever his deeds on the battlefield might be, they would pale in comparison with those before the forces engage in combat.

Daniel Seltzer accords importance to the manner in which Hal's character gains in depth and understanding through the three Henry V plays, and argues that Hal, in that he does exhibit this growth, represents a major step in Shakespeare's progress towards the great tragic heroes. Seltzer calls this advance in artistry, where characters are able to give voice to their more profound perceptions of self in a theatrically convincing way, the "mode of internalized writing" as

... our focus in the theatre is forced upon the central character's acceptance and identification of what might be called the responsibility of the self... Hal is of course no tragic hero, but the depths of the character correspond in interesting ways to depths which the center of tragic focus must achieve... a full study of Shakespeare's development of the mode of internalized writing would show further experiment in his projection of Brutus, but full fruition in the four major tragic heroes. But without his delving into Hal, in whom all known modes of playwriting and this new one as well are used to project the character's experience of himself, he could never have carried Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, or Lear to their ultimate moments of inner perception.

Seltzer's view is one which is consistent with the development of Hal's character as seen through his conduct on the battlefield. Our perception of his "responsibility of self" is enhanced by the fighting

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at Shrewsbury, where we, as spectators, see his active participation, and by the fighting at Agincourt, where we quite conspicuously do not.

It is difficult, especially when dealing with an era in which kings actually fought, to think of any national endeavor other than war in which the head of state can be truly equal with his subjects; as Sir Thomas Erpingham says of his rough lodgings in the English camp, "now lie I like a king" (4.1.17). By making, as R.G. Moulton notes, the "English nation itself" the hero of Henry V, Shakespeare brings to a completion his portrait of the ideal king, for at Shrewsbury Hal was the Champion of the loyal English; at Agincourt he shows that they no longer need one.

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CHAPTER X

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING--TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Troilus and Cressida as a Chronicle Play

The inclusion of Troilus and Cressida in a study of Shakespeare's chronicle plays may require some explanation; indeed, critics are sharply divided as to its genre, with opinions ranging from its being comic satire, a view primarily associated with O.J. Campbell, to "a poetic drama of astonishing coherence and power," as R.A. Brower describes it. In her introduction to the Cambridge edition of 1957, Alice Walker discusses the play's genre under the heading "Comedy or Tragedy" two pages after a frontispiece showing the title page of the 1609 edition: "The Historie of Troylus and Cressida," 1 and as Clifford

Leech notes, *Troilus and Cressida*

... was called a 'history' on its quarto title page in 1609, a 'comedy' in the anonymous preface printed in one issue of that quarto edition, and a 'tragedy' according to the place originally intended for its printing in the 1623 Folio.²

Two reasons are offered for considering *Troilus and Cressida* a chronicle play. First, as has been mentioned previously, the Troy story was a part of English historical myth from the time Geoffrey of Monmouth began his *History of the Kings of Britain* with the fall of Troy: "after the Trojan war, Aeneas fled from the ruined city with his son Ascanius and came by boat to Italy ..."³ As J.S. Tatlock noted in 1916:

No traditional story was so popular in the Elizabethan age as that of the siege of Troy and some of its episodes: because of its antiquity and undying beauty, of the fame and greatness of the early writers who had treated it, and to some extent of the rooted tradition that the British were descendants of the Trojans. After the close of the Middle Ages its popularity had increased rather than diminished.⁴

It has been argued that the Arthurian legend is of vital importance in understanding the Cult of Elizabeth, and through it, the significance of the swordfighting sequences in the two tetralogies. The Troy myth, in this respect, is an extension of that idea. The Britomart prophecy in the *Faerie Queene* establishes Elizabeth's ancestry not only as far as Arthur, but to Assarac, the great-grandfather of Aeneas:

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³Geoffrey of Monmouth, 54.

⁴John S.P. Tatlock, "The Chief Problem in Shakespeare," *Sewanee Review* 24 (1916): 134. In a footnote to a separate essay on the Troy myth in Elizabethan England, Tatlock writes that *Troilus and Cressida* is "a historical play. Shakespeare himself meant to give a mingled impression, and was prevented from unifying plot and feeling by the fact that the material was too well known to be much modified. There is absolutely no essential difference between the Troilus and Henry IV." John S.P. Tatlock, "The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature, Especially in Shakespeare and Heywood," *PMLA* 30 (1915): 768-79.
Until that Brutus anciently deriv'd
From royal stocke of old Assarac's line . . .

(2.10.9)

William Warner's Albion's England (1586) describes how

... of this conqueror, this isle
Had Brutaine unto name,
And with his Troians Brute began
Manurage of the same.

(3.14.1-4)

R.A. Foakes is surely correct, then, when he writes that "the story of Troy had a meaning for the age of Shakespeare which it has now lost," and it matters little if many Elizabethans agreed with Sir John Hayward, an exact contemporary of Shakespeare's, that the Troy element in English history was a senseless fiction invented by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Holinshed was equally skeptical about Arthur, but once a national myth has taken hold, as can be seen by American attitudes to a totally unhistorical wild west, its "truth," using the word literally, becomes unimportant.

Second, and probably more important for this study than the play's association with England's mythical past, is its distinctly medieval setting, with the combat scenes, and references to combat, forming a particularly rich component of that setting. Furthermore, it will be argued that some of the more puzzling episodes of the play, such as the Hector-Ajax combat of 4.5, are clarified if examined in this chivalric light.

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The Play's Medieval Military Character

The Siege of Troy is a medieval siege, not substantially different from the Siege of Orleans in 1 Henry VI. There are several references to "alarums" in the play, which, it has been observed, would often call for the stagekeeper to let "the chambers be discharged," creating the "ungracious clamors" which unsettle Troilus (1.1.89). The siege is interrupted by periods of "dull and long-continued truce" (1.3.262), a common feature of sieges in the Hundred Years' War, and Thersites refers to the Greeks' need to "undermine" the walls of Troy (2.3.8). The Greeks and Trojans are referred to as knights nine times, and Diomedes, of course, fights with a lady's favor in his helmet.

The conduct of the Greeks and Trojans during the siege is seen as reflected in the adherence or lack of adherence by specific characters to the code of chivalry. This goes far deeper than references to Troilus as a "prince of chivalry" (1.2.229) or Hector's remark that he is in the "vein of chivalry" (5.3.32). As Tillyard notes, there was, in Elizabethan England,

[a] great inherited conception of Troy as a rich and wonderful city whose fall was one of the most striking and exemplary treatments of Time and during whose flourishing so many chivalric or base or romantic deeds were transacted.7

If it is accepted that Shakespeare took the code of chivalry seriously, at least when placing it in a medieval setting, then an episode such as Hector's killing of the anonymous Greek "for his armor" (5.6) might be seen in an alternative perspective, rather than arguing,


as Rosalie L. Colie does, that "Hector's chivalrous challenge is belied by his killing an unknown Greek for his armor," or commenting, as does Alice Shalvi, that "seeing an anonymous Greek soldier in a superb coat of armor, Hector is suddenly overcome by lust, greed, and covetousness."8

Hector is not after an "anonymous soldier": if the armor is, as Malone's stage direction (5.6.26) reads, "sumptuous," he is a knight. The armor itself shows that this opponent, unlike Thersites, is of "blood and honor" (5.4.28), and that his armor would be a worthy trophy of war. As Bullough notes, there is a strong Homeric element to accompany the material drawn from medieval sources in the war narrative of Troilus and Cressida, and in Homer, it is a matter of course that the great heroes strip the armor of a defeated opponent; indeed, when it does not happen Homer remarks upon it.9 In imitation of this classical model, victorious knights in a chivalric tournament took their opponents' armor as a legitimate spoil of the contest;10 Hector is not, therefore, unusually covetous. His challenge to the unknown knight bears close inspection:


9Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources 6:87-89; The Iliad: 4.532, 5.48, 5.435, 5.842, 11.100, 11.579, 13.201-02, 13.343, 15.553-5, 17.98, the last example being the stripping of Achilles' armor from Patroclus' body by Hector. The prize of Sarpedon's armor is an important issue in Book 17. In Hector's general challenge to single combat it is assumed that the winner will receive the loser's armor (Bullough 6:124). Book and line numbers for The Iliad are as in Richmond Lattimore, trans., The Iliad of Homer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

10Keen, Chivalry, 85.
Scand, and thou Greek, thou art a goodly mark.
No? wilt thou not? I like thy armor well;
I'll frush it, and unlock the rivets all,
But I'll be master of it. Wilt thou not, beast, abide?
Why then fly on, I'll hunt thee for thy hide.

(5.6.27-31)

Hector's "I like thy armor well" is no more than a reference to the Greek knight's apparent worthiness to be his opponent (a repeat of "thou art a goodly mark"), and should not be read as the only reason Hector is prepared to engage him. His wish to be "master" of the armor is simply metaphor for "I will win this encounter," for if Hector cared only for the armor and its value, he would hardly want to "frush" (batter) it so hard that the rivets would pop out. When the Greek flees, Hector refers to him as a "beast," which in turn makes the final metaphor of hunting the knight "for thy hide" an apt end to the couplet. The Greek's flight is more than a device to get them off stage, for according to the code of chivalry, no disgrace was greater than that of cowardice, as Shakespeare himself shows, with a negative example, in the degradation of Fastolfe in 1 Henry VI, and with positive examples in the deaths of Young Talbot and Young Siward.

There is nothing demeaning about the hunting metaphor; Homer frequently uses such imagery for the battle exploits of his heroes. It is also of interest that the standard Latin phrase for the armor taken from a defeated opponent is spolia opima, for the word spolium itself has a literal meaning of "animal hide."11 Furthermore, the Greek knight (in Caxton a "noble baron"), deserves to be so hunted; as has been noted above, according to chivalric tradition "gross cowardice was

11The Iliad: 5.554-560, 11.291-298, 11.547-566, 17.132-139. Ben Jonson boasted to Drummond that "in his Service to the Low Countries, he had in the face of both the Campes Killed ane Enimie & taken opima spoilia [sic] from him." Jonson, Conversations, 11.
notionally punishable by death."12 This in turn is consistent with the idea of a "fair" outside to a "putrefied core" (5.8.1) and the fact that, for the Greek, "thy goodly armor thus hath cost thy life" (5.8.2); the "one in armor" has paid the price of exhibiting his true nature as a beast to be hunted, i.e. a coward in a knight's armor.13

Given this Homeric/medieval picture of the siege of Troy, it is most likely that the actors would use the same type of swords, shields, and armor as employed in Henry VI.14 Homer's spears are not mentioned, while references to both swords and armor are ubiquitous, so one assumes that when Achilles and Hector meet in battle at last they would use either sword and target or bastard-sword—although Achilles refers to his "scimitar" when boasting of how he will kill Hector (5.1.2), the interchangeability of "rapier" and "sword" demonstrated above would indicate that in this instance Shakespeare does not expect to be taken literally.15

It has also been noted previously that Nestor's armor is described in some detail, and words such as "gorget" and "rivet" (1.3.174-75), "beaver" and "vantbrace" (1.3.296-97) give clues to its character. The only alteration from the first or second tetralogy which comes to mind might have been the exact nature of the gown, and the "toga" over the

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12Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources 6:206. See above, 147.

13This interpretation of the episode is not new. R.A. Brower correctly notes that "Hector's killing and plundering of a Greek in goodly armor" is not an act of intense greed, as it is sometimes regarded, but an average heroic exploit at time when we are expecting a duel between great heroes." Brower, however, offers no support of this opinion. Brower, 269-70.

14Whether or not the play was ever actually performed in Shakespeare's time is not relevant, as it was written to be performed.

15See above, 76-77.
Elizabethan clothing in the Peacham drawing is some indication that a similar garment indicative of the classical period, as the Elizabethans perceived it, could have been worn by the Greek and Trojan knights in Troilus and Cressida.16

The Hector-Ajax Fight as a Tournament Foot Combat

Whatever the merits of the foregoing argument might be in establishing the propriety of considering Troilus and Cressida a chronicle play set in the medieval period, no element of the work is more evocative of a chronicle history than its first swordfight: the Hector-Ajax combat in 4.5. Of all the commentaries on the play which I have seen, some of which deal with this combat at length, only one, in a very recent essay by Linda La Branche,17 has referred to it by its proper title, which is a "tournament combat." More precisely, it is a "foot combat," possibly "at barriers," a contest, as Viscount Dillon notes, which "often formed a part of the exercises of tournaments."18 Critics from Gervinus (1850) to Barry Nass (1984) have referred to the

16It has been commented upon previously, in relation to the Battle of Bosworth Field, that the common modern conception of "classical" style—white statues, buildings, and garments—shows little understanding of the character of ancient Greek society. It is possible that the Elizabethans had a better idea than most of us as to what the Greek "style" was. See T.J.B. Spencer, "'Greeks' and 'Merrygreeks': A Background to Timon of Athens and Troilus and Cressida," in Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama In Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1962), 223-233; Tatlock, "Chief Problem in Shakespeare," 138.

17Linda La Branche, "Visual Patterns Linking Analogues in Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Quarterly 37 (1986): 440-50. La Branche clearly understands this combat as being one of "martial sport," but offers no specific reasons for her view. Perhaps she considers it obvious, but an examination of the critical literature on Troilus and Cressida shows that it is not obvious to many.

Hector-Ajax engagement in 4.5 as a "duel," while Robert Kimbrough calls the episode a "trial by combat," which should apply only to a combat fought upon a charge of treason, such as Edgar v. Edmund. The perception that the combat, at least as it commences, is "to save the blood on either side" (1H4. 5.1.99) and decide the war, is shared with varying degrees of explicitness by Daniel Seltzer, Alice Shalvi, and Lawrence Danson. David Houser refers to it as a "deadly fight," for which Shakespeare stresses the "hollowness of motives."

R.A. Foakes comments upon the importance of the events of 4.5, in that they mark a change in the play's tone: "Cressida is delivered to the Greeks, Ajax and Hector fight, and Diomedes easily wins over Cressida; humour almost disappears." In this respect, the indecisive tournament combat represents the end of the war as a form of chivalric combat sport, and the beginning of a decidedly less sportful struggle.


21Foakes, "Troilus and Cressida Reconsidered," 146.
It should be noted, before proceeding to an explication of the Hector-Ajax combat, that as it is not a military swordfight, i.e. one which is part of a battle scene, discussion of its actual staging will be undertaken in the chapter on "formal combats." What might be called its "general nature," however, must be dealt with at this time, as my interpretation of the act five battle sequences relies to a degree on points to be made concerning this earlier swordfight.

To look at the sources for the Hector-Ajax fight is to become aware that the diversity of opinion noted immediately above is partly due to the somewhat inconsistent and confusing manner in which Shakespeare combines different episodes from them to create it. As observed by Bullough,22 the chief inspirations for the military sequences in Troilus and Cressida are the Iliad and the late medieval romances of Caxton and Lydgate. In book seven of Chapman's Homer, Hector offers a general challenge to mortal combat on the battlefield, but there is no implication whatsoever that it is to be decisive in the larger context of the war:

This I propose and call high Jove to witnesse of our strife:  
If he with home-thrust Iron, can reach th' exposure of my life  
(Spyling my armes) let him at will convey them to his tent;  
But let my body be returnd, that Troys two-sixt descent  
May waste it in the funerall Pyle; if I can slaughter him,  
(Apollo honoring me so much) Ile spoyle his conquerd lym,  
And beare his armes to Ilion, where in Apollos shryne  
Ile hang them as my trophies due: his bodie Ile resigne  
To be disposed by his friends in flamie funerals . . .23

When no Greek takes up the challenge instantly, lots are drawn; Ajax Telamon is chosen to fight. A vividly-described combat of spears and rock-throwing ensues, but the fading light causes a halt before swords are drawn:

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22Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:83-111.

23Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:124.
Then close to swords they would have gone, and laid on wounds of waight,
Unlesse the Heralds, messingers of gods and godlike men, 
(The one of Troy the other Greece) had held betwixt them then Imperiall scepters, when the one, Idaeus, grave and wyse, 
Said to them, now no more my sonnes, the soveraigne of the skyes Both love you both; both soldiers are, all witnesse with good right:
But now Night laies her mace on Earth; t'is good t'obay the night.24

The combat is followed by an exchange of gifts.

Later in Homer, Hector and Ajax Telamon do battle several times as the Trojans make a furious assault on the Greek ships (bks. 11-16), and again as Ajax Telamon defends Patroclus' body (bk. 17). While these episodes are not all in Chapman's edition of 1598, they would have been available to Shakespeare in others, in Latin if not English.

As has been noted, Lydgate and Caxton are essentially identical in that they are both based on the work of Guido della Colonne.25 In these versions, the first meeting of Hector and Ajax Telamon is in a sequence analogous to the battle of the ships, and the two heroes fight exactly as Malory's knights do, first with spears and then with sword and shield, until, realizing that they are cousins, they stop. Hector, at Ajax's request, agrees to halt his soldiers' advance to the Greek ships and retires, and then, during a three-month truce after the death of Patroclus, Hector visits the Greek camp and delivers his fruitless challenge to Achilles, a challenge which is, indeed, to a battle of champions to decide the war.

Shakespeare introduces the idea of single combat in 1.3, as Aeneas visits the Greek camp under a flag of truce to offer Hector's

24Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:126.
25See above, 212.
26See above, 212.
AENE. Is this great Agamemnon's tent, I pray you?
AGAM. Even this.

AENE. May one that is a herald and a prince
Do a fair message to his kingly eyes?

(1.3.216-19)

Aeneas' failure to recognize any of the Greek kings by sight is a pointer to the chivalric quality of the scene: as has been noted above in the discussion of the battlefield challenges in *Henry VI* and *1 Henry IV*, the closed visor of the medieval helmet meant that a knight could fight an opponent without ever seeing his face. This quality of medieval warfare is alluded to again in 3.3; after the tournament Achilles will invite Hector to dinner in his tent:

To see great Hector in his weeds of peace,
To talk with him, and to behold his visage,
Even to my full of view.

(3.3.239-41)

The challenge which Aeneas delivers for Hector has been mistakenly interpreted as satiric by more than one commentator. Tillyard cites it as evidence that the Trojans' "antiquarian" chivalrous conduct hover[s] on the borders of the tragic and the ridiculous. If we need confirmation that Hector's challenge is not to be taken in full seriousness we can find it in the [ensuing] speeches of Agamemnon and Nestor.27

Tillyard's comments regarding all aspects of the Hector-Ajax combat are indicative of his perception of it as a combat which neither the Greeks nor the audience should take seriously, and indeed, if this were a challenge to single combat of the sort that Hector offers the Greeks in Homer, or that Hal offers Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*, Tillyard would be

27Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*, 59-60. Tillyard's view is shared by Houser and McAlindon, who call the challenge "ridiculous," and Colie, who claims that "nothing could be sillier." Houser, 310; McAlindon, 37; Colie, 335.
correct. Hector's challenge, and the manner in which Aeneas delivers it, however, is entirely consistent with a challenge to a tournament combat, as was commonly given during the long sieges of the Hundred Years' War by a knight to a knight or knights of the opposing side.

**Tournament Combats During Sieges**

Froissart describes one of the more interesting examples of such a combat, during the Duke of Lancaster's siege of Rennes in 1357:

And also there was a yong bachelar called Bertraude of Glesquyne [the famous Bertrand de Guesclin], who duryng the siege fought with an englysshman called sir Nicholas Dagonet, and that batayle was takeyne thre courses with a speare, thre strokes with an axe, and thre with a dagger. And ech of these kyghtes bare themselfe so valyantly, that they departed fro the felde without any damage, and they were well regarded bothe of they within and they without.28

Another such contest occurred during Henry V's siege of Rouen, when, as recorded by Monstrelet, a challenge to break three lances in front of the city gates was offered by the English knight Sir John le Blanc to the Bastard d'Arly, who was

... one of the principal captains of the town ... in front of the barriers they attacked each other gallantly, but it happened that at the first thrust the English knight was run through the body and unhorsed.29

In offering Hector's challenge, Aeneas refers to Hector's valor and the beauty of Andromache (1.3.260-283), going on to say that if no Greek were to answer the challenge, it would prove that Greek women are not as beautiful as those of Troy. Attestations to Hector's valor should require no comment, but Colie's view that the reference to

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28Froissart, *First Volum*, fo. lxxvi r. The fact that the contest is limited to a certain number of strokes in each category will be seen to be of some interest in deciding the manner of staging of the Hector-Ajax tournament combat. See below, 314-15.

Trojan and Greek womanhood somehow belittles the challenge must be addressed. It should be remembered that this challenge relates to a form of combat inherent in the tournament, and the tournament's association with courtly love goes back, as Richard Barber notes, at least as far as the twelfth century:

Towards the end of the twelfth century, the ideas of courtly love were adapted to the circumstances of a tournament, and the romantic ideals of the poets began to be reflected in real life. Honour and the lady's love were now the spur.31

Geoffrey de Charney wrote (c. 1350) that a knight would always "seek higher renown for the honour it will do to his lady,"32 and Malcolm Keen notes that in all feats of arms there was an implicit vow by the knight to uphold his lady's honor; this association was extended to actual battle as well:

The knight's determination to do honor to his lady and make himself worthy in regard to her is the inspiration behind his vow [to perform feats of arms] . . . but if we look carefully we will also find plenty of instances of vows of a similar kind taken to perform feats of arms in real war.33

In the rules of a foot combat fought 20 July 1446, found in Chastelain's Life of J. de Lalain, Lalain specifies that "if I am borne to the ground, I shall give to a lady named by my conqueror a diamond, value 600 crowns," and for a combat of 27 December 1448, "whoever is borne to the ground, shall for one year wear a gold bracelet, closed with a key, and not to be opened but by the lady who holds the key, and to whom he shall present the bracelet."34

30Colie, 335.


32Cited Keen, Chivalry, 13.

33Keen, Chivalry, 212.

34Cited Dillon, "Barriers and Foot Combats," 278.
Perhaps the most interesting example of all is the famous (some might say notorious) Combat of the Thirty, which took place near Ploermel in Brittany on 27 March 1351, when, or so it appears, thirty English knights fought thirty French knights. Barbara Tuchman notes that it "began with a challenge to single combat issued by Robert de Beaumanoir, a noble Breton on the French side, to his opponent Bramborough of the Anglo-Breton party,"35 and while accounts differ as to what actually transpired, the one in the Histoire de Bretagne is pertinent to this discussion:

The Marshal [de Beaumanoir] reprobated the conduct of the English, and high words passed between them . . . at last one of them proposed a combat of thirty on each side . . . as they were on the point of engaging, Bembro [Bamborough] made a sign to Beaumanoir he wished to speak to him, and represented he had engaged in this matter rather imprudently; for such combats ought first to have had permission of their respective princes. Beaumanoir replied he [Bembro] had been somewhat late in discovering this; and the nobility of Brittany would not return without having proved by battle who had the fairest mistresses.36

In the New Arden edition of Troilus and Cressida, Kenneth Palmer comments that "Hector's challenge is traditional in form, in that it opposes the challenger's mistress against the whole world," and goes on to say that the virtues accorded Andromache "are those to which Shakespeare normally appeals," adding an interesting observation regarding Aeneas' "even so much" which ends the challenge:

Apparently some such formula was usual at the end of an herald's speech, cf. Montjoy in Henry V 3.6.145: 'So far my king and master, so much my office.'37

35 Tuchman, 131-2.


The Greek Response

It is difficult to agree with Tillyard's description of the response of Agamemnon and Nestor as one of not taking Aeneas in "full seriousness," or with Gervinus when he writes that "Agamemnon himself doubts whether it be in earnest or in mockery."38 Although Agamemnon is somewhat circumlocutory in his reply, and might be said to use a slightly jesting tone, the reply is courteous, and is offered in the same "sportful," yet formal manner as Hector's challenge to "sportful combat," with reference to Greek womanhood and the romantic attitudes of Greek soldiers, closing with an offer to fight himself if no other answerer comes forward:

This shall be told our lovers, Lord Aeneas,
If none of them have soul in such a kind,
We left them all at home. But we are soldiers,
And may that soldier a mere recreant prove,
That means not, hath not, or is nor in love?
If then one is, or hath, or means to be,
That one meets Hector; if none else, I am he.

(1.3.284-290)

Nestor's answer, which might be characterized as more humorously self-deprecating than mocking Hector or his Herald, is appropriate coming from one who is too old to be either a fighter or a lover.

Tell him of Nestor, one that was a man
When Hector's grandsire suck'd. He is old now,
But if there be not in our Grecian mould
One noble man that hath one spark of fire,
To answer for his love, tell him from me
I'll hide my silver beard in a gold beaver,
And in my vambrace put my withered brawns,
And meeting him will tell him that my lady
Was fairer than his grandam, and as chaste
As may be in the world. His youth in flood,
I'll prove this truth with my three drops of blood.

(1.3.291-301).

Aeneas, with equal good humor, rises to the occasion and hopes that Nestor's participation will not be necessary: "Now heavens forbid such scarcity of youth!" (1.3.302).

The Lottery

The plan of Ulysses and Nestor to engineer the choice of Ajax to fight Hector immediately follows, and the manner in which Nestor describes the forthcoming combat indicates its nature:

... Though't be a sportful combat,  
Yet in this trial much opinion dwells;  
For here the Trojans taste our dear' st repute  
With their fin'st palate . . .

(1.3.335-38)

The sense of Ulysses' and Nestor's discussion is that by ensuring Ajax's participation instead of Achilles', they will change a situation from which they could not derive benefit to one from which they would, whatever the result. Were Achilles to fight and win, he would be insufferable; were he to lose, it would mean that the best of the Greeks were no match for Hector. If Ajax were to fight and win, it would be an embarrassment both to Hector and Achilles; were he to lose, the Greeks would have a ready excuse in that they did not put forward their best man. There is no implication that the safety of Achilles or Ajax is under threat, a very different matter from the reaction of Agamemnon and the other Greek kings when Hector challenges Achilles to single combat in Caxton, and H.M. Cook is in error when he writes of Ulysses' intention in rigging the lottery, that "if Ajax were to win, the Greeks would be rid of Hector."39

The lottery, as has been seen, comes from Homer, but the rigging

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of it, as Kenneth Muir notes, is Shakespeare's invention. There is some doubt, however, that this rigged lottery ever eventuates; we have arrived at the first of the abovementioned inconsistencies in drawing from the sources.

The first scene of act two is in the Greek camp, and appears to follow on immediately from the preceding scene; there is a change in locale, from Agamemnon's tent to Ajax's, but there is little passage of time, for when Achilles reads Hector's challenge, he says that Hector will appear "tomorrow morning" (2.2.126). At the end of the scene Ajax goes off to find out about the lottery (2.1.141-42).

After 2.2 (the "Trojan Council" scene), 2.3 brings us back to the Greek camp; it is after dinner (2.3.113), and the Greek kings are approaching Achilles' tent. The conversation amongst the Greeks when Achilles will not see them relates entirely to Achilles' refusal to take the field the next day in battle:

ULYSS. Achilles will not to the field to-morrow. (2.3.161)

DIO. You must prepare to fight tomorrow without Achilles. (2.3.227)

Although Hector's challenge was prompted, in part, by the inactivity of a "dull and long-continued truce" (1.3.262), there is no mention of the challenge in 2.3, and at the close of the scene Ulysses speaks of Ajax (in his presence) as being a vital force in a battle which is expected on the next day:

Fresh kings are come to Troy; to-morrow
We must with all our main of power stand fast;
And here's a lord—come knights from east to west,
And cull their flower, Ajax shall cope the best, (2.3.261-64)

G. Blakemore Evans, in the Riverside Troilus and Cressida, understates

40Muir, introd., Troilus and Cressida, 16.
the case when he notes that "this line seems to ignore the truce and the single combat set for the next day," for not only the line, but the entire scene does; if there is to be a rigged lottery, then why is it necessary for Ulysses to flatter Ajax (2.3.182-264)? The events of 2.3 are simply not consistent with those of 1.2 and 1.3.

The problem is compounded by 3.1 (chiefly involving Helen, Paris, and Pandaros), in fact so much so that 3.1 takes on the appearance of a scene printed out of its proper order. Even if one ignores, for a moment, the truce, it has been clearly established that the single combat of Hector and Ajax is to be the next day after 1.2 and 1.3, and although this does not occur until 4.5, 3.1 shows Helen going off to greet the Trojan warriors who are returning from the field (3.1.161-62). However, the sequence of events after this scene (3.2 to 4.5), in which the single combat occurs, are all within the time-frame of reference established in 2.3. When Diomedes is sent to Troy to negotiate the exchange of Antenor and Cressida, he is also to

Withal bring word if Hector will to-morrow
Be answered in his challenge: Ajax is ready.

(3.3.34-35)

Palmer notes that "since the decision to rig the lottery, nothing further has been said of arrangements for the combat, but arrangements have clearly been made," but he is incorrect in his view that "all that now rests is for Hector to agree to the day." It has already been


42 I have not found the incongruity, in terms of the time sequence of the play, of 3.1 with the scenes which precede and follow it, which I consider to be glaring, to be remarked upon by commentators to date.
established that Hector "will tomorrow with his trumpet call"
(1.3.277).43

The events of the play then proceed in consistent order to the end, provided that one accepts the "long-continued" truce as now over. Assuming the text of Troilus and Cressida is not corrupt,44 one is led to the conclusion that in drawing events from various sources, Shakespeare, through either carelessness or design, has not reconciled all of the resultant discrepancies. This might also be offered as a possible cause of Hector's sudden turnabout in the Trojan Council scene (2.2), for the debate, as it occurs in Lydgate and Caxton, concerns what the Trojan response will be to the abduction of Hesione, and Hector is consistent in his argument, which might be described as "do not start something you may not be able to finish"; when Priam decides on an expedition to avenge the abduction of Hesione, Hector remains silent.45 While it is difficult, perhaps fruitless, to speculate about Shakespeare's intentions in the episodes of the rigged lottery, the Trojan council, and the Helen-Paris-Pandarus sequence, I believe these instances, as well as the Achilles-Polyxena relationship which is mentioned as a cause of Achilles' refusal to fight in 3.3, but which in

43Palmer, 206. Muir alters "bring word if" (3.3.34) to "bear word that," noting "although editors have not commented on the QF reading at this point, it would appear to be one of the places where the absence of a separate F reading had allowed a Q error to stand. Diomedes cannot discover in Troy if Hector will be answered in his challenge; and it would seem that (yt) was misread as yt and that bring was copied inadvertently from 31." Muir, 124.


45A marginal note in Bergen's edition of Lydgate reads "don't begin what you can't see the end of" (2.226). All quotations and line references from Lydgate are from Henry Bergen ed., Lydgate's Troy Book, 3 vols. (London: Early English Text Society, 1906-10)
Caxton and Lydgate commences a year after the death of Hector, point to an attempt on Shakespeare's part to condense the broad outlines of Homer, Chaucer, Lydgate, and Caxton into only three days, a task which understandably proved to be beyond him.

To return to the "sportful combat," Thersites' prediction of a "heroical cudgelling" (3.3.248) for Ajax is also indicative of the type of combat in which he will receive it. As Palmer observes, Thersites shows his contempt for the whole affair by describing it in terms of "countrymen with quarter-staves," and the possibility that Hector will break Ajax's neck (3.3.258) could be a reference to "a form of death normal in jousting." 46 There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Palmer's first observation, but the second is somewhat improbable: while a broken neck might have been a frequent cause of fatalities in the joust, it is as likely that in this context it should be understood as Thersites' non-specific hyperbole.

Only a few more matters regarding the preamble to the combat of 4.5 require attention. Ajax's instructions to his trumpeter (4.5.6-11) are seen by Tillyard to be parodic: "it might almost be Ancient Pistol speaking." 47 Were this to be a battle of chivalry, Tillyard might be correct, but if it is seen that Shakespeare is presenting a tournament combat, then the ornate character of Ajax's speech is not necessarily reminiscent of Pistol. Even if, in the tourney's Elizabethan manifestations such as the Accession Day Tilts, the speeches were, as Chambers notes, "full of romantic conventions and courtly flattery," 48

46Palmer, 220.

47Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays, 74.

this does not in itself indicate that the tilting and fighting at
barriers to follow would be undertaken with any lack of seriousness, as
one's skill at such displays certainly mattered deeply to the
Elizabethans. They were, after all, as William Segar, Elizabeth's King
of Arms, wrote of Sir Henry Lee, assembled to

... performe in honor of her sacred Maiestie ... whereupon the
Lords and Gentlemen of the sayd court, incited by so worthy an
example, determined to continue that custome, and not unlike to the
ancient Knighthood della Banda in Spaine, have ever since yerely
assembled in arms accordingly.49

Sir William goes on to record that an ambassador from the Low Countries
wrote of how he saw Sir Henry Lee "breake certaine lances, which action
was performed with great dexterity and commendation." Further to this
point, a scoring sheet which shows Lee running fifty-one courses and
succeeding in breaking thirty-two lances hardly attests to anything
other than a serious attitude towards the feats of arms of the
Accession Day Tilts,50 and it is therefore reasonable to argue that
Ajax's words to his trumpeter, however ornate, do not imply that the
ensuing combat should be seen as something farcical.

The Edge of All Extremity

After the entrance of Cressida to the Greek camp, Hector's trumpet
sounds (4.5.63) and the Trojans enter. Aeneas' speech of greeting, in
which he questions the Greeks as to the rules of the combat, is a
crucial one in determining its exact nature:

Hail, all the state of Greece! What shall be done
To him that victory commands? or do you purpose
A victor shall be known? Will you the knights
Shall to the edge of all extremity

49Segar, 197. See also Chambers, Sir Henry Lee, 130.

50Segar, 200; scoring sheet Chambers, Sir Henry Lee, 134.
Pursue each other, or shall they be divided
By any voice or order of the field? (4.5.65-70)

Essentially, it appears as if Aeneas is asking if the knights are to fight until one is unable to continue or if the bout is to be ended by decision of judges, but there is more to it than that; "the edge of all extremity" is, as Palmer notes, a literal translation of the French à l'outrance, which was the accepted medieval term for a combat with sharpened, rather than bated, weapons—the latter was called combat à plaisance.51

The transliteration of à l'outrance is an expression which appears in Malory as well as in Shakespeare—"to the utterance"—and its English usage in such tournament combats indicates a fight "to the utmost," i.e. until one is no longer capable of continuing, but not necessarily because one has been killed.

In Malory, knights often fight to the "utterance," and the meaning is consistent with that given here;52 there is no implication that fighting is to be "to the death" unless the combat being described is automatically such an engagement, such as a battle of chivalry upon a charge of treason. Shakespeare uses "utterance" five times in the

51 Palmer, 248. There appears to be no disagreement amongst historians as to the definition of à l'outrance being "with sharpened, rather than bated weapons," particularly when related to a feat of arms in a tournament. While fighting à l'outrance was more dangerous, it did not imply a fight to the death; some confusion is caused by the fact that some medieval French writers employed the term when describing a paige de bataille, an early form of duel, and in that context it would indeed mean a battle to the death, as all such combats were. It is therefore important to keep the specific type of combat in mind when defining the term. See Tuchman, 6; Cripps-Day, 16 & 47, Barber, The Knight and Chivalry, 162. The English for the combat à plaisance is just of peece. "to use the English term at the time of Edward IV." Cripps-Day, 47.

52 See Malory, 1:178, 1:313, 1:324, 2:691, 2:1083, 3:1192. Only when it is obvious all along that a fight is intended to be "to the death" does "utterance" have that implication (3:1139 & 3:1219).
sense of something spoken, and twice in the sense relevant to this
discussion. Cymbeline speaks of keeping his honor "at utterance"
(3.1.72), and there is Macbeth's soliloquy ("To be thus is nothing .
. .") which ends with:

... the seeds of Banquo kings!
Rather than so, come fate into the list,
And champion me to th' utterance!

(3.1.69-71)

Although in both of these instances the idea of fighting to the death
is implicit, it is not completely explicit. Even if this
explicitness existed, however, its applicability to real rather than
metaphorical combat does not necessarily follow.

Agamemnon, in response to Aeneas' question concerning the
conditions of the combat, asks Hector's preference, and Aeneas replies
"he cares not, he'll obey conditions" (4.5.72). After a sharp exchange
between Aeneas and Achilles, in which Achilles shows his contempt for a
combat with blunted weapons—"a maiden battle, then?" (4.5.87)—
Agamemnon returns to the question, still unresolved, of the conditions
of the combat, and employs the term "uttermost," which is, of course,
virtually identical in meaning with "utterance," and in the context of
Agamemnon's speech, clearly means "until one of the combatants is
unable to continue":

AGAM. Here is Sir Diomed. Go, gentle knight,
Stand by our Ajax. As you and Lord Aeneas
Consent upon the order of their fight,
So be it, either to the uttermost,
Or else a breath. The combatants being kin
Half stints their strife before their strokes begin.

53In the Riverside Shakespeare, Evans does not comment on "the
dge of all extremity," but in his note to Cymbeline (3.1.72) says that
Cymbeline will defend his honor "to the death," and in Macbeth (3.1.69-
71) notes that Macbeth will fight "until I perish or fate be thwarted." 
Evans, ed., 1536, 1323.
ULYS. They are opposed already.

AGAM. What Trojan is that same that looks so heavy?

(4.5.88-95)

By this time, then, Ajax and Hector are ready to begin, and the conditions are still undecided, as Agamemnon is distracted by his seeing an unknown Trojan (Troilus), and questions Ulysses as to his identity. As Ulysses finishes his description (4.5.96-112) the combat begins, without the audience ever being told whether the bout is à l'outrance or à plaisance, although the actors could easily show that an agreement has been reached by miming a discussion while Ulysses speaks.

The Character of Ajax

As has been noted previously, the actual contest will be discussed in a later chapter. Therefore it is appropriate to jump ahead in order to deal with one more point concerning this combat before turning our attention to the swordfights in the battle scenes of act five: if this was to be only a "sportful combat," how does one explain Ajax's lines after its conclusion?

I came to kill thee, cousin, and bear hence
A great addition earned in thy death.

(4.5.140-41)

Ajax's comment should be taken in a general way relative to his coming not to the lists for this combat, but to Troy to fight a war; in this sense he did come to kill his cousin. Support for this view can be found in two areas: the exact wording of 4.5.140-41, and what is consistent with Ajax's character as Shakespeare created him, and as the Elizabethans understood him.

The first point can be dealt with briefly: the combat is in the Greek camp, and in this sense Ajax has not "come" anywhere to fight--Hector has come to him. The second, regarding Ajax's character,
requires much more discussion; it is one of the most interesting problems in the play, and like so much else in *Troilus and Cressida*, it has given occasion to a wide diversity of opinion.

As is the case with other matters surrounding this combat, difficulties with Ajax's character are largely due to Shakespeare's conflation of varied sources. In this instance, however, the problem is not only a result of combining different versions of the Troy story, but of combining two distinct characters from Homer: Ajax Telamon and Ajax Oileus. The situation is further complicated by the prominence of Ajax Telamon, and his insanity and death after losing the contest for Achilles' armor, as told in Ovid. As Bullough notes,

The characterization of Ajax probably owed something to Homer's Ajax Telamon, the noble 'bulwark' who in Book XI becomes temporarily a 'dull mill-ass;' also to Lydgate's boasting Ajax Oileus. But Shakespeare undoubtedly recalled the quarrel between Ajax and Ulysses over Achilles' armor in Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, XIII.53

Muir offers a similar comment:

Shakespeare confused, or fused, two different Ajaxes ... the Ajax who is backward in fighting (2.1) is modelled on Oileus; the Ajax who fights with Hector in 4.5 is modelled on Thelamonyous ... Shakespeare also incorporates the character depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (13.1-441), where Ulysses speaks of Ajax's "blockish wit" and contrasts the functions of the intelligent soldier such as himself with the brainless fighter such as Ajax, as Shakespeare's Ulysses does in 1.3.56

Many commentators accept Ajax's servant Thersites' characterization of him as Shakespeare's, emphasizing the Ajax which is most consistent with their view of the play, and ignoring his other

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54Greek names receive a variety of spellings in English. For the sake of consistency and simplicity, Edith Hamilton's "Telamon" and "Oileus" will be used here, except in quotations. Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: New American Library, 1969).


qualities. Fleay suggested that he is a satiric portrait of Jonson, and Gildon, in 1710, wrote that Shakespeare made Ajax a "perfect idiot." Schlegel, as translated by Black, calls him a "coarse braggart." Gervinus remarks upon his "blood-thirsty impatience before the duel," and notes that "physical strength is exhibited, strengthened at the expense of mental power." Wilson Knight notes his "block-headed stupidity" and nothing else, while A.P. Rossiter offers a similar characterization. Jan Kott's colorful description is "chicken-brained heap of flesh . . . a buffoon"; Northrop Frye says he is "all beef and no brains," Arnold Stein a "hulking simpleton."57

While this side of Ajax certainly exists in Shakespeare, comments such as "chicken-brained" are, however amusing, hyperbolic. Shakespeare's Ajax is illiterate (2.1), and he is indeed played for a fool by the crafty Ulysses in 3.1; he is boastful when he offers to "pash" Achilles "o'er the face" (3.1.213). That, aside from Thersites' railings, is all we learn of his buffo nature, and Thersites is hardly a disinterested observer. As Bullough notes in the paragraph cited above, Ajax as Miles Gloriosus comes from the Ajax Oileus of Lydgate; his slow-wittedness is, according to Bullough, from the Ajax Telamon of Ovid. But Bullough's idea that Ovid offers an Ajax who is "doltish," or, as J.S.P. Tatlock remarks, is "arrogant and stupid," may be

challenged;\textsuperscript{58} it is too easy to equate Ajax's madness, which Ovid does momentarily portray, with his supposed foolishness, which he does not.

In Ovid's debate over Achilles' armor, Ajax is anything but a "dolt"; he speaks in a forthright and admirable way of his courage on the field of battle and of the nobility of his ancestry as compelling reasons why the armor should be his—this is no less apparent in Golding's Elizabethan, than in a modern translation. He casts serious doubt upon Ulysses' worthiness to receive a trophy of war; the shield Ulysses already owns is unused. Horace Gregory remarks that "Ajax's speech actually damages Ulysses' prestige, and in a way that would please Roman readers."\textsuperscript{59} The charge that Ajax has a "blockish wit" and is "doltish" is made by Ulysses in reply,\textsuperscript{60} and Ulysses, as Gregory notes, has been stung by Ajax's speech. When, after Ulysses sways the Greeks, and Ajax, in a mad rage, falls on his sword in a traditional Roman suicide, Ovid's final characterization of him is as a hero:

\begin{quote}
... He that did so oft sustaine
    Alone both fyre, and sword, and Iove, and Hector could not bye.
\end{quote}

Ajax's insane slaughter of cattle before committing suicide is not in Ovid, but was known to Shakespeare, either directly or indirectly, from Sophocles;\textsuperscript{62} in 2 Henry VI, York, before the First Battle of St.

\textsuperscript{58}Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:108; Tatlock, "Chief Problem in Shakespeare," 139.


\textsuperscript{61}Ovid, fo. 164 v.

\textsuperscript{62}Tatlock notes that such "direct or indirect" knowledge of Sophocles' Ajax is in Heywood's Troia Britannica. Tatlock, "Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature," 731.
Albans, says

And now, like Ajax Telamonius,
On sheep or oxen could I spend my fury.

(5.1.26-27)

Tatlock's view that "the slaughter of cattle under a hallucination could not have struck the Elizabethans as anything but comic" 63 may be questioned. It is difficult to see it as comic to the Greeks, and the madness of Ophelia, Lear, and Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's tragedies would hardly be seen as comic by the Elizabethans.

Tatlock cites other references to Ajax in classical or Elizabethan literature, but they do not point to a tradition of Ajax being automatically considered a pompous braggart. Apuleius, in The Golden Ass, cites only his madness, and Stephen Gosson, in the Schoole of Abuse, which is not typical of Elizabethan literary thought, cites the "rashness" of Ajax, but as part of a list denouncing the "cowardice" of Ulysses and the "dotage" of Nestor. 64

Ajax Telamon's suicidal madness is alluded to several times by Shakespeare: in Love's Labor's Lost Berowne is as "mad as Ajax" (4.3.6), and in Antony and Cleopatra, Cleopatra describes Antony as "more mad then Telamon for his shield" (4.13.1-2). In The Rape of Lucrece, Ajax's aspect in Lucrece's painting is one of "blunt rage and rigor" (1. 1398). While the Berowne reference might be said to be satiric or amusing, the others are not.

The other element giving rise to a perception that Ajax was a buffoon to the Elizabethans is, of course, his name being a pun on the

63 Tatlock, "Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature," 731.

common Elizabethan term for a privy; it is, as T.M. Parrott very cleverly notes, as if Shakespeare created a French character with the name "Captain La Trine." Sir John Harington based an entire satire, The Metamorphosis of Ajax (1596), on the pun, and Shakespeare employs the double-meaning when Thersites refers to Ajax on the field "asking for himself" (3.3.245); furthermore, as Robert Kimbrough notes, he includes a mention of Ajax amongst the Worthies in Love's Labor's Lost (5.2.578) for no other apparent reason than the pun, an opinion I hold regarding the reference to him in The Taming of the Shrew (3.1.53).

A more interesting reference to Ajax is in King Lear, when Kent is put in the stocks, apparently for saying

None of these rogues and cowards,
But Ajax is their fool.

(2.2.124-25)

G.B. Harrison feels the remark is directed at Cornwall:

This cryptic but devastating remark rouses Cornwall to fury, for he realizes from Kent's insolent tone that by 'Ajax' he himself is intended . . . Kent thus implies, 'all these knaves and cowards are fooling this stinking braggart.'

Kittredge offers an alternative view, which is accepted by Kenneth Muir in the New Arden King Lear, that "Ajax is a fool in comparison with them," i.e. Oswald, Cornwall, and presumably Regan.

These interpretations, though plausible, require a tortuously indirect reading of Kent's lines; I believe G. Blakemore Evans


66 Kimbrough, 42.


is closest to the mark with his simpler view that the only "Ajax" is Oswald: "villains of this kind are always willing to boast that they are braver than Ajax."69 If Evans is correct, then this allusion is to Ajax as a hero, not as Miles Gloriosus.

An argument might be offered that simply too much has been made of a pun. There is no hint of satire in Heywood's depiction of the quarrel over Achilles' armor in The Iron Age, and while one can point to the comic allusion to Ajax in Love's Labor's Lost, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare would have Antony speak of "the sevenfold shield of Ajax" (4.14.38) before his suicide if it automatically meant "the sevenfold shield of La Trine." It is significant that Tatlock, who emphasizes the Love's Labor's Lost allusions, dismisses, without other comment, Antony's metaphor as "colorless."70 Evidently "colorless" means non-satiric.

I consider Shakespeare's Ajax to be, in large part, the great Ajax Telamon of Homer, the Ajax Telamon whose boastfulness and stupidity in Elizabethan tradition has been overestimated by commentators. As strong an element in the Troy myth, as it reached the Elizabethans, as the boastfulness of Ajax Oileus (in the funeral games honoring Patroclus in Homer, Ajax Oileus finishes a race in a pile of dung), is the perception of Ajax Telamon as one of the most admirable of the Greek heroes, a magnificent fighter who quite conspicuously does not, like Ulysses, try to evade his war service, but from the very start is ready to kill his cousin and any other Trojan he encounters in battle. Lydgate describes him as "discret and vertuous" (2.4582), blessed with a fine singing voice (2.4587), and, most importantly for our purposes,

69 Evans, ed., 1269.

70 Tatlock, "Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature," 730.
as

... a noble knyght--
No man more orpid nor hardier to fight,
Nor desyrous for to han victorie,
Devoide of all pomp hatyns all veyn glory...

(2.4593-97)

This quality of Ajax is shown clearly in Heywood's portrayal of him.

In the debate with Ulysses over Achilles' armor he says:71

Because I hasted to the siege of Troy,
When hee feign's madness, must he weare these armes?

(5.1.51-52)

Ajax's lack of self-doubt as to the reason he came to Troy is also shown earlier in Heywood's play, when the Greeks start armistice negotiations:

... Ajax sayth no,
Whose sword as thirsty as the parched earth,
Shal neuer ride in peace upon his thigh,
Whilst in the towne of Troy there breathes a soule
That gave consent unto the Spartans rape.

(2.3.42-50)

As Bullough notes, "the Ajax who fights Hector and is praised by the latter in 4.5.113-47 is the Ajax Telamon of Iliad, books seven, seventeen, and elsewhere,"72 and my argument is that an Elizabethan audience would therefore have been likely to understand Ajax's comment, "I came to kill thee, cousin," as the remark of a knight who, although he came to Troy to kill his cousin, came into the lists only to defeat him.73

Ajax's double personality makes him a difficult and fascinating

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71Quotations from The Iron Age are from Arlene W. Weiner, ed., Thomas Heywood's The Iron Age (New York: Garland, 1979).

72Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 6:89.

73Foakes observes that "we interpret the play by what we know of the characters and events outside the play." I consider this also to be true of the Elizabethans in the playhouse. Foakes, "Troilus and Cressida Reconsidered," 152.
challenge for the actor, but not an impossible one, for the powerful and courageous soldier, entirely admirable and sympathetic in those traits, who is also something of a likeable oaf, has become a very popular character in cinema. Ajax would not be out of place in many a war film, and one is hard pressed to think of a character earlier than Shakespeare's Ajax who might have served as progenitor to this now common screen personality. As Parrott notes, Ajax is

... a capital acting part. He is, after all, a bluff, honest, single-minded fighting man, which is more than can be said for his fellow Greeks.74

The Battle Scenes of Act Five

The remaining sequences of 4.5, and 5.1 to 5.3, are concerned with events falling between the Hector-Ajax combat and the battle (5.4-5.10) of the following morning. The swordfighting sequences of this battle are the means by which Shakespeare resolves the play's narrative, and therefore form a crucial element in enabling both a critical understanding of the text, and a successful performance of it: as William P. Shaw, in a 1977 essay devoted entirely to the Troilus and Cressida battle, notes, "the success or failure of the production rests on the credibility of the final scenes."75 Troilus and Cressida is not unique in this aspect; as argued above, the swordfighting in 2 and 3 Henry VI, 1 Henry IV, and Richard III perform a similar function in bringing the theme or themes of the play into prominence at the play's conclusion, and it will be seen that the same may be said of Macbeth. Robert Kimbrough correctly observes that the plot construction of

74Parrott, 344.

Troilus and Cressida resembles that of 1 Henry IV, since "three separate plot lines move toward each other, finally joining in a battle scene," and Tillyard, while writing (incorrectly, I believe) that "the battle scene is not especially interesting," also (correctly) notes that it "will bear comparison with the final battle scenes in Macbeth."76

Virtually all of Troilus and Cressida is in some way relevant to the final fighting. The overriding concern of the Greeks throughout is Achilles' refusal to fight, and the Troy myth carries with it Hector's fame as military hero. The characterization of Troilus, like that of Hector, is infused with ideas of chivalry and military prowess; hence the third narrative line, the love story from Chaucer, is never far removed from Troilus' attitude towards the fighting; his lack of desire to fight as the play begins is seen in sharp contrast to his desperate and reckless fury in battle after Cressida's infidelity is made known to him. There is only the brief (ninety-four lines) beginning of 5.3, in which Andromache, Cassandra, and Priam try to dissuade Hector from fighting, between Troilus' offering "distracted thanks" to Aeneas for escorting him back to Troy (5.2.189) and the alarum later that morning which indicates, as Troilus says, that

They are at it, hark! Proud Diomed, believe,
I come to lose my arm, or win my sleeve.

(5.3.95-96)

The first actual combat could come with the "excursions" of the opening stage direction to 5.4, which in Q is "Enter Thersites. Excursions" (5.4.OSD), and in F is "Enter Thersites in excursion" (5.4.OSD). As, it has been argued, is so often the case, the "excursion," while not requiring swordplay, does not preclude it, and

76Kimbrough, 70; Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays, 80.
the battle of Troy, as Agincourt was supposed to be but was not, could be opened with "four or five most ragged foils" engaged in infantry fighting. It is indeed likely that there would be some onstage fighting in this excursion, as Thersites' opening line is rendered most effective with emphasis on the first word, in as direct a reference as possible to what he (and we) have just seen: "Now they are clapper-clawing one another! I'll go look on" (5.4.1-2).

"I'll go look on" would then be accompanied by a move towards the direction in which the fighting has exited, before Thersites is momentarily distracted by a desire to tell the audience, in a bitter and mocking fashion, of the situation in the Greek camp. Although he is about to exit to see the fighting after his comments on Ajax and Achilles, the exit is made unnecessary by the fighting's coming to him, as seen in F:

Enter Diomed and Troylus.77

THER. Soft. Here comes sleeve, and t'other.

TROI. Fly not, for should'st thou take the river Styx, I would fly after.

DIO. Thou dost miscall retire, I do not fly, but advantageous care Withdrew me from the odds of multitude. Have at thee.

(5.4.18-23)

Although there is no stage direction such as "they fight," Diomedes' "have at thee" demands a clash of weapons. How would this first engagement, punctuated by Thersites' excoriations, have appeared in an Elizabethan production? It has already been argued that the fighting, in terms of arms and armor, would have been similar to that of Henry VI, but what might be deduced regarding the manner in which the

77There is no stage direction in Q.
characters use their bastard-swords or swords and targets, and what
comment, in turn, would such an approach to the fighting imply about
the characters in question?

When looking at the character-relationships of the combatants in
Troilus and Cressida, it becomes immediately apparent that we are
closer to the world of 2 and 3 Henry VI than to Richard III or 1 Henry
IV, for they have all previously met, and in some instances have a
personal grievance, while the face-to-face relationship of Richard and
Richmond or Hal and Hotspur begins and ends with the fight. Troilus'
feelings of bitterness towards Diomedes in this combat are obvious, but
is this feeling returned? The previous meeting of Diomedes and Troilus
was in 4.3, when Diomedes was the ambassador assigned to receive
Cressida and escort her to the Greek camp. Troilus greets Diomedes
with high courtesy, and with an allusion to the chivalrous conduct of
war, promises:

Entreat her fair, and by my soul, fair Greek.
If e'er thou stand at mercy of my sword,
Name Cressid and thy life shall be as safe
As Priam is in Ilion.

(4.4.113-16)

When Diomed replies by praising Cressida's beauty, with a pointed
remark that Troilus' offer of special consideration on the battlefield
is an irrelevancy, and Troilus angrily accuses him of unchivalrous
conduct, Diomedes quietly puts Troilus in his place:

... know you, lord,
I'll nothing do on charge. To her own worth
She shall be priz'd, but that you say, "Be't so,
I'll speak it in my spirit and honor, "No."

(4.4.137)

Although Diomedes and Troilus are both at the Hector-Ajax combat, they
exchange no words, nor is there any implication that Diomedes is aware
he is being watched while wooing Cressida in 4.5. His attitude towards
Troilus as the battle starts, then, would be one with no personal
bitterness, but, if anything, a feeling of confidence and superiority, even smugness.

How would this relationship of Diomedes and Troilus be shown in their first engagement? First, Diomedes' confident and logical response to Troilus' charge of cowardice would indicate that he is in command of the situation. Leaving aside the difficult question of Troilus' horse for the moment, the fact that he returns to the stage having obviously gotten the better of the encounter would encourage the actors to show Diomedes as the very capable fencer who will be untroubled by Troilus' angry attacks. Diomedes, then, could be seen in this fight to be toying with Troilus, and although Thersites is anything but a fair-minded witness, his contemptuous remarks can serve as a useful guide to the action: "Hold thy whore, Grecian!--now for thy whore, Troyan!--now the sleeve, now the sleeve" (5.4.24-25).

Thersites' first remark implies that Diomedes makes an attack towards Troilus, which Troilus successfully parries. With Troilus ready to return the attack, the two "nows" in the line directed at him by Thersites are, like the previous "now" (5.4.1), most interesting if emphasized; Thersites is here a parody of the fencing master, who is calling out "now!" for the precise moment of the thrust or stroke Troilus needs to employ to win back the sleeve. The second "now" could be understood by an audience, in Shakespeare's time or our own, as Thersites' advice to thrust at the sleeve and thus catch it on his sword's point, the repetition of "the sleeve" being an imitation of the excited, exasperated coach. Given the familiarity of Shakespeare's audience with fencing, and the probable expertise of the actors, such subtleties in the swordfights would have been communicable to the spectators—indeed they are today when skillfully performed.
In arranging this first bout to gain maximum value of Thersites' remarks, there is the danger of turning the whole battle scene into the sort of comic episode which commentators such as O.J. Campbell and Alice Walker would probably see as fitting their conception of the play as satire. In this instance, such a danger is minimized by the fact that, although neither Q nor F has a stage direction to show the exact moment, the fight quickly moves offstage, and Thersites' final "the sleeve" could even be delivered after the exit. While the humor of Thersites' "coaching" is maintained, the belittling of Troilus' fury is de-emphasized if he is no longer visible to the spectators.

Thersites, of course, is soon to leave the scene, as he squirms his way out of having to face the mighty Hector (4.4.28-29), and he is not there to belittle the three-way fight of Ajax, Diomedes, and Troilus (5.6), or that of Hector and Achilles (5.6). How injurious is he to a serious perception of the fighting in *Troilus and Cressida*? No more than Falstaff is in *Henry IV*, as he, in the midst of the battle of Shrewsbury, carries sack instead of a weapon, pretends to be killed in order to avoid a real fight, delivers his famous catechism on honor, and then claims to have slain Hotspur.78 Falstaff's humorous advice to Hal and Hotspur just as they commence their climactic battle shows that Shakespeare considered himself capable of manipulating an audience so well that it could laugh heartily at what someone says about, or the attitude a character takes to, an event on stage, and yet in the very next moment be completely and empathically involved with that same event.

78S.L. Bethell has noted the similarity of Thersites' role at Troy to that of Falstaff at Shrewsbury. S.L. Bethell, "Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition," in Seltzer, ed., *Troilus and Cressida*, 232.
Modern editors mark the entrance of Diomedes, who instructs his servant to look after the horse he has just won from Troilus, as the beginning of a new scene (5.5), although the locale is still the field of battle; all totaled the battle takes up seven scenes when the text is edited in this way. Q, however, has no act or scene divisions, and F has only act divisions; it could be argued that modern editorial practice has more obfuscated than clarified an action which, with its quick entrances and exits, is already difficult enough to follow on the page. Kimbrough observes:

The resolution of the play on the battlefield is so disparate and disjointed that editors have snipped the scene into seven small ones . . . but it is a single scene, chaotic to be sure, yet moving steadily to a determined end, the death of Hector which will lead to the fall of Troy and the end of this war of 'honor.' 79 Kimbrough is correct about the manner in which the battle moves to a "determined end," but his understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship between the apparently confusing nature of the text and editorial practice is the exact opposite of mine. The dividing of one or two scenes into seven is more the cause of confusion than a remedy; a new scene in Shakespeare normally indicates a change in locale, and there is no such change apparent once the battle in Troilus and Cressida begins. While this study, for the sake of clear reference to the text, has had to retain the scene divisions in act five of Troilus and Cressida, the whole sequence is, in spite of some obviously missing stage directions, easier to follow in Q or F than in a modern edition.

What is important to establish in the spectator's mind before 5.5 and 5.6 is not a change in locale, but a passage of time. It is a commonplace that many Shakespearean scenes start at a specific time, e.g. the midnight of 1.1 of Hamlet, and end, after a few minutes of

79 Kimbrough, 62.
playing time, several hours later, as Horatio sees "the morn, in russet mantle clad" (1.1.166). In this quick succession of fights, however, it is hard for the spectator to perceive this few minutes of swordplay as anything other than a few minutes of swordplay; this, in turn, is what renders such combat sequences, all too frequently, amusing rather than exciting, or classifies them as evidence of inferior craftsmanship on Shakespeare's part. In this instance, Shakespeare has exacerbated the situation by having Diomedes re-enter, eleven lines after his exit, with instructions for the care of a previously non-existent horse.80

If the various sources of Troilus and Cressida might be considered historical chronicles for a moment, then in "turning the accomplishment of many years into an hourglass," Shakespeare has created a chronology that is more "wild"81 than anything in 1 Henry VI. The sequence of Troilus' horse is from Caxton and Lydgate; this and some other events of this one battle sequence, e.g. the deaths of Patroclus and Hector and the appearance on the field of the Sagittary (5.5.14), are years apart in the story as it is told in the "chronicles."

In relation to the specific problem of 5.5, some means of giving the impression of an intermediate period, although there is no mention of it in the dialogue, would give a clearer and more interesting view of the stage combat by indicating sufficient time for Troilus and Diomedes to fight, be separated, regain their mounts, fight again, and have Diomedes unhorse Troilus. Although neither Q nor F indicates excursions during 5.4 or at the beginning of 5.5, it is noteworthy that neither text indicates the exit of Troilus and Diomedes at 5.4.25,

80It will simply not do to say that such a discrepancy is not noticeable in performance; anything noticeable to the reader is there for the attentive spectator as well.

81See above, 117.
although it is obvious that such an exit must occur. This missing
"exeunt fighting," which might, like 3.3.34,\(^{82}\) be considered an error
in Q which F fails to correct, could very well have been "exeunt
fighting . . . excursions," thereby establishing a needed passage of
time as I have argued is done in 3 Henry VI (1.3) and Richard III
(5.4): with some visible combat.

The next bout shows the enraged Troilus challenging both Ajax and
Diomedes, and, as Hector's praise--"well fought, my youngest brother"
(5.6.12)--indicates he has the upper hand, driving both offstage.
Shakespeare prepares for this bout by including reports of battle
events in the previous scene: Patroclus is dead (5.5.13-17), the
Sagittary is killing numerous Greeks (5.5.14), "there is a thousand
Hectors in the field" (5.5.19), and Troilus "hath done to-day mad and
fantastic execution" (5.5.37-38), killing a friend of Ajax's (5.5.35).
This scene, then, serves a double purpose: it establishes both the
character-relationships for the ensuing swordfights and the passage of
time for these events to have occurred, much as excursions would do at
5.4.25.

Shakespeare makes it clear that both Ajax and Diomedes prefer to
take on Troilus alone (5.6.9-10), heightening this episode's contrast
with the Myrmidons' slaughter of Hector later on. Troilus' rage has
been discussed, in part, above, but the initial encounter with Diomedes
would, it has been argued, be a brief one. This swordfight, however,
is after Troilus' further humiliation, and offers a reverse of the
common view of the Trojans as chivalrous and the Greeks barbarous by
comparison.\(^{83}\) As Neil Powell notes:

\(^{82}\)See above, 265.

\(^{83}\)See Spencer, "'Greeks and Merrygreeks,'" passim.
The brutality of [Troilus'] intention . . . should guard us from the assumption that only Achilles seeks bloody retribution for private loss.\textsuperscript{84}

Brower agrees:

On the Trojan side, Troilus' fighting is little less than barbarous, the violence of a disordered mind, not the combat of a true knight . . . Hector, 'in the vein of chivalry,' seems to Troilus 'to have a vice of mercy in him.'\textsuperscript{85}

W.P. Shaw offers a cogent observation that the battle sequences of \textit{Troilus and Cressida} reflect "the disintegration of order into chaos," and in so doing comment upon what he sees as the central theme of the play, which is that this "disintegration" occurs as a result of "the inability of men to govern their individual, social, and political lives by certain fixed principles founded in degree and intrinsic value."\textsuperscript{86} While Shaw is not specific as to exactly how the stage combats would have been rendered most effective on the Elizabethan stage, or would be in a modern production, and while commentators generally have placed far more emphasis on the Hector-Achilles combat and the death of Hector, it might be argued that this swordfight involving Troilus, Ajax, and Diomedes is of as great an importance to the theme Shaw proposes, for if the "prince of chivalry" is "barbarous" in his fighting, we have then returned to 2 and 3 Henry VI, where English chivalry is similarly discarded in a quest for personal vengeance. The savagery of Troilus' attack on Diomedes and on Ajax, who, it should be remembered, wants to avoid an uneven fight even though he has cause to seek revenge, can be shown in its staging, just as would be the swordplay of St. Albans, Barnet, and Towton. In a


\textsuperscript{85}Brower, 268.

\textsuperscript{86}W.P. Shaw, 29.
modern production, then, it is important that this fight not carry the combatants off stage too quickly, but that there be a chance for the action to reflect the attitudes the three characters, particularly Troilus, bring to the fighting.

The Hector-Achilles Combat

With the exit of Troilus, Ajax, and Diomedes, Hector and Achilles are at last to meet in combat; like the Hal-Hotspur fight of 1 Henry IV, this encounter has been prepared for by previous events in the play. A comparison of these two most famous of classical heroes has been implicit, and at times explicit, since 1.3; Hector's challenge to a tournament combat is obviously intended for Achilles, and Achilles' invitation to Hector to dine after the combat, with his "woman's longing . . . to see great Hector in his weeds of peace" (3.3.237-39), accentuates the tension behind what is to occur when the two meet in other garb. They consciously avoid addressing each other before the tournament combat; Achilles makes a disparaging remark concerning Hector's attitude to the contest, (4.5.72-74) Aeneas gives a sharply-worded reply on Hector's behalf:

In the extremity of great and little,
Valor and pride excel themselves in Hector,
The one almost as infinite as all,
The other blank as nothing.

(4.5.78-81)

This tension is intensified when, after the combat with Ajax, Hector is first introduced to Ulysses, while Achilles remains a brooding and silent presence until he interrupts Ulysses and speaks directly to Hector:

Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee;
I have with exact view perus'd thee, Hector,
And quoted joint by joint.

(4.5.231-33)

The underlying nastiness of the ensuing exchange, in which Achilles
boasts of how he will kill Hector (5.4.242-46), and Hector, with an apology for his immodesty (5.4.257), delivers a forceful riposte, is accentuated by a comparison with the chivalrous conversations Hector holds with Ajax, Agamemnon, Nestor, and Ulysses. This leads directly to Hector's direct challenge, and Achilles must accept or lose face:

Dost thou entreat me, Hector?
To-morrow do I meet thee, fell as death;
To-night, all friends. (4.5.268-70)

The challenge, then, is accepted, and the meeting of Achilles and Hector appears to be inevitable, but not before Achilles has been embarrassed in two verbal combats before the battlefield encounter. Although it is ostensibly the death of Patroclus which rouses Achilles into a fury, giving him the impetus to join the fight after a letter from Hecuba regarding Polyxena (5.1.36-44) makes him repudiate his pledge to appear, Patroclus' demise takes place offstage, while these verbal encounters are seen and heard by the audience, therefore gaining more importance in establishing the personal relationship which colors the swordfight.

This is, of course, the first (and last) time Achilles fights in the play, and the only battlefield swordfight for Hector. There is no pre-fight challenge, as one was given in 4.5, and to repeat it here would only serve to remove emphasis from Achilles' brutal speech before he sets his Myrmidons upon Hector, a speech with which, as Tillyard notes, Shakespeare "falls into his own early manner in Henry VI."87

Although Q and F are without stage directions for the fight, it is obvious that Hector finds Achilles an easy match, and offers a pause (5.6.14) out of his sense of "fair play" (5.3.43), confirming that he

87Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays, 80.
is, indeed, "today i' th' vein of chivalry" (5.3.32). David J. Houser is in error when he writes:

To make sensible Hector's invitation to 'pause, if thou wilt' (5.6.14), Achilles must show his weariness, perhaps by being forced to his knee or by having his sword or shield beaten from him. It would make no sense for Hector to offer a "pause" if Achilles were at a total disadvantage by losing control of his weapon; the pause would be automatic. A more appropriate staging would be for Achilles to mount a furious attack of both thrusts and blows, but for Hector, in his skillful and even-tempered style of sword-and-target or bastard-sword fencing, to have no difficulty in defending against the attack. The swordfight, then, reflects upon the verbal encounter in 4.5, as Achilles desperately aims a blow or thrust at each of the places on Hector's person where he boasted he would kill him—

Tell me, you heavens, in which part of his body
Shall I destroy him—whether there, or there, or there?

(4.5.242-43)

—only to be easily, although impressively, thwarted. Achilles is not weary, he is simply outclassed, and Hector's comment that he would have been "fresher" had he "expected" Achilles is richly ironic; he was expecting Achilles (5.3.71), but Achilles' long delay in entering the field of battle, caused by his deciding not to appear after receiving the letter from Hecuba, had led Hector to assume that Achilles was not coming after all.

The Battle's Conclusion

The episode of the "one in armor" having been discussed previously, the next engagement requiring comment is that of Menelaus and Paris, "the cuckold and the cuckold-maker" (5.7.9). It has been

88Houser, 134.
argued that during the first Troilus-Diomedes battle, Thersites pretended to be a fencing master. In this sequence, as is noted by most modern editors,\textsuperscript{89} he, with his cry of "loo," pretended to be a spectator at a bull or bear ring. It is difficult to comment on this bout; Paris is characterized as being somewhat effete in 3.1, and Menelaus is shown to be of far lower status than Agamemnon, Nestor, or Ulysses in the Greek camp. Given that the fight is accompanied by Thersites' mocking remarks, there is a temptation to imagine the fight as broadly comic, which would not necessarily be inappropriate. Although this bout does come just before the murder of Hector, Falstaff's antics at Shrewsbury show, as argued previously, that Shakespeare does, on occasion, place a comic sequence immediately before a serious, even tragic, combat, without any apparent damage to the latter.

The murder of Hector, while carried out with swords, as shown by Achilles' "strike not a stroke, but keep yourselves in breath" (5.7.3), hardly classifies as a swordfight, as it is clear that Hector has no opportunity to defend himself. It is mentioned here only to avoid giving the impression that the final encounter of the battle is the apparently comic one between Menelaus and Paris; if that were the case, the interpretation of \textit{Troilus and Cressida} as a comic satire would have more merit, while this discussion has, it is hoped, added some debating points on the side of those who, like Muir, consider such a notion of the play to be dependent upon "some strange interpretations of the text."\textsuperscript{90} A last point requiring a brief mention is the entrance of Pandarus (5.10.32). It is held by many commentators that the entry of

\textsuperscript{89}E.g. Palmer (New Arden), Harrison, Kittredge, Evans (Riverside), and Seltzer (Signet).

\textsuperscript{90}Muir, ed., \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, 21.
Pandarus onto the battlefield is most incongruous, an argument which, on the face of it, seems incontestable—E.A.J. Honigmann considers it an indication of Shakespeare's late revision of the play, in that

Troilus repudiates Pandar twice in almost identical words—in the final scene and also at the end of act 5, scene 3... these lines [5.10.32-34] are more appropriate in scene 3, a palace scene, than in scene 10, a battle scene, since Pandar nowhere else appears on a battlefield or wears armor.91

My disagreement with Honigmann is that Pandar does not necessarily appear on the battlefield; Q and F show only "enter Pandarus," and Malone's stage direction indicating his entrance "from the other side" is far less logical than Pandar's entering on the tiring-house gallery. He speaks to Troilus, and then the audience, from the walls of Troy.92

91Honigmann, "The Date and Revision of Troilus and Cressida," 45.

92The tiring-house gallery would be wasted space if it were only used where Q or F of the various plays shows "enter above" or "enter on the walls." The location of Juliet's entrance and re-entrance in 2.2 is specified in neither Q nor F.
CHAPTER XI

MILITARY SWORDFIGHTING--MACBETH

The final military swordfights to be considered in this study of the chronicle plays are those of Macbeth, with Macbeth first meeting, and defeating, Young Siward, before his fatal encounter with Macduff.¹


Why Shakespeare chose to have the battle in King Lear offstage is a most interesting question which can only receive the briefest of considerations here. It could not be Shakespeare's disenchantment with the battle scene, as Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Cymbeline are accepted as later plays than Lear. Gary Taylor, in an essay devoted exclusively to the Lear battle, sees its absence as an important element in the radically different structure F's shorter act four gives to the play. He argues that in F there is a much stronger sense of momentum towards the battle from the moment the news of the French army's landing is given in 3.7: "The Folio strengthens an audience's expectations of armageddon, and therefore makes the anti-climax when it comes not only sharper but more meaningful."

Leo Kirschbaum observes that in this war Albany is "militarily on one side and morally on the other," which could account for its lack of emphasis. It is also possible that Shakespeare wished to keep the battle offstage so as to make the trial by battle in 5.3 all the more climactic. Gary Taylor, "The War in King Lear," Shakespeare Survey 33 (1980): 27-34; Leo Kirschbaum, "Albany," Shakespeare Survey 13 (1960): 26-7.

The reasons for not including Cymbeline in a study of the English chronicle plays are given in a brief appendix to this chapter.

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Although, it will be seen, there are some important differences between the fighting in this battle and that at Bosworth Field, the similarities are startling. Both show the defeat of a villainous king, who is also the protagonist, in decisive single combat at the end of the play. In both cases the opponent has returned from a form of self-imposed exile, and in both plays, as John Philip Kemble, a celebrated Macbeth of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries observes, both Macbeth and Richard III die bravely in the face of certain defeat, after one instance of "momentary dismay." Furthermore, in both plays identical and very difficult problems in staging present themselves, as the stage directions show the protagonist killed onstage, but necessitate, without explicit provision for their removal, the bodies being offstage so that Richard's crown, and Macbeth's head, can then be brought in.

Macbeth, like Richard, has always been a star vehicle; in Arthur Colby Sprague's account of stage business in Shakespearean performance from 1660 to 1905, the Macbeth chapter, fifty-seven pages in length, is only one page shorter than that concerned with Hamlet, and is longer than both the Othello chapter and the one concerned with all the remaining tragedies. Similarly, Richard III takes up nearly twice as much space as any of the other plays normally classified as histories. Unfortunately, since all of the productions included in Sprague took place behind a proscenium arch, the descriptions there are of little

2Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 320.


4Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors, 94-107, 224-80.
assistance in determining the practicalities of staging the fights as they were originally performed.

As he does in Richard III, Shakespeare prepares for the final battle with alternating scenes of the two sides. Macbeth's impassioned preparation for what he assumes will be a siege, rather than a pitched battle (5.3 and 5.5.1-7), is brought to a sudden stop when he hears "the cry of women" (5.5.8) signalling the queen's death, and his speech (5.5.17-28) is all the more effective if delivered in a sudden quiet which, after the frenetic noise of the battle preparation, would have a positively eerie quality to it. From the entrance of a messenger at 5.5.29 to the scene's conclusion, however, the tension and passion of the action re-establish themselves. With his realization of the "equivocation of the fiend" (5.5.42) comes Macbeth's decision to leave the castle and fight in the open field--stage productions, or films, such as Roman Polanski's version, which show Macbeth fighting inside the castle, are simply contrary to the text:

... Arm, arm, and out.
If this what he avouches does appear,
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.
I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate of the world were now undone.
Ring the alarum bell! Blow, wind. Come, wrack.
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

(5.5.45-51)

Shakespeare's use of the alarum bell could have a most interesting effect upon the fight scenes which ensue. A bell has already been heard to great effect just before Duncan's murder, and a similar sound here would point to the irony of Macbeth's also being summoned "to heaven or to hell" (2.1.64), although in this case, as with Richard III, who hears the chiming of a clock just before his final battle (5.3.276), there can be little doubt as to the slain king's ultimate destination. The bell can also help to establish locale; should it
still be heard, but at a softer level, throughout 5.6 and 5.7, then the proximity of the fight to the castle walls, and, metaphorically, to Macbeth's downfall, is emphasized; like cannon-fire, the tolling of a bell is an inherently dramatic sound effect.

The first swordplay occurs in Macbeth's fight with Young Siward at 5.7.11, although some productions have shown Macbeth, again Bellona's Bridegroom, killing several others before meeting Young Siward; indeed sometimes a mass-battle with footsoldiers is enacted between 5.6 and 5.7, although no excursions are indicated in F. For the same reasons given for analogous situations in 3 Henry VI, Richard III, and Troilus and Cressida, I believe visible fighting to be the best means of establishing in the spectator's mind the passage of sufficient time for the battle to have turned in Malcolm's favor. It is unlikely, however, that Shakespeare would have desired Macbeth's participation, as this would lessen the impact of his climactic fight with Macduff; the Young Siward fight can have this unwanted effect if not carefully managed.

The episode of Young Siward is taken from Holinshed's Chronicles of England:

It is recorded also, that in the foresaid battle, in which earle Siward vanquished the Scots, one of Siwards sonnes chanced to be slaine, wherof although the father had good cause to be sorrowfull, yet when he heard that he died of a wound which he had received in fighting stoutlie in the forepart of his bodie, and that with his face towar'ds the enimie, he greatlie rejoised thereat, to heare that he died so manfullie.

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5See above, 118.


7See above, 167-68, 180.

8Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, 7:507.
The significance of Young Siward's death is very similar to that of the death of Young Talbot, although in this case the death does not exemplify the decline of English knighthood, but, in a sense, is a sacrifice marking its taking root in Scotland. Marvin Rosenberg makes the valid point that the combat helps to reinforce the idea of Macbeth's "charmed life" (5.8.12), which he will lead until he meets one not "of woman born" (5.8.13). What is Macbeth's state of mind as he meets Young Siward, and how is it set in relief by the figure of his opponent? Harley Granville-Barker offers a most helpful observation:

He fights, one would suppose, like an automaton and perhaps the more dangerously for that. In clear contrast is the gallant, crusading figure of Young Siward, flashing to his death.

Young Siward's chivalric virtue is epitomized by the fact that it is he who challenges Macbeth, by first demanding to know his identity (5.7.4), and then, as G.R. Elliott notes, denouncing Macbeth to his face—the first time this has occurred in the play—while Macbeth's reaction, in turn, speaks well of his own strength of character which we see, as we do in Richard III, on the battlefield:

... he does not utter a single word in repudiation of that verdict. So our sense of uplift at the end of the tragedy is due in no small measure to the fact that Macbeth has at least the grace not to claim for his doings any tinge of grace.

What weapons would Macbeth and Young Siward fight with? We know Macbeth has a shield, as he will later refer to it in his last speech (5.8.33), and so it seems certain that he fights with sword and target.

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9See above, 146-47.

10Rosenberg, Masks of Macbeth, 631.


To emphasize Young Siward's nationality, his appearance should be as alike to that of Young Talbot as his character; it is most likely that he would wear armor covered with a gown showing heraldic insignia, and would fight with either sword and target or bastard-sword.

While this is a splendid opportunity for some exciting combat, there would be little point in its continuing for other than a very short time. Macbeth thinks he is invulnerable, and the audience, even if unaware of the play's outcome, would not expect a new and relatively minor character to be the one to turn the Bloody Child's prophecy to Macbeth's disadvantage. The fight therefore holds no real tension, and so need only last long enough for us to see at least one instance of Young Siward's prowess, demonstrating that the English are totally unlike the "epicures" of Macbeth's scornful comment (5.3.8).

As is the case for Macbeth in 5.8, no provision is given in the text for the removal of Young Siward's body. It is possible, as Roy Walker observes, that on the large Globe stage the body could be left there while Old Siward passes by in triumph without noticing it, but it still must be "brought off the field," as Ross reports (5.9.10); the body must not be present when Old Siward is told of his son's death. Therefore it seems most probable that supernumeraries dressed as footsoldiers, or, as argued for Richard III, standard-bearers, would carry Young Siward off immediately after the fight.

With the entry of Malcolm and Old Siward into the castle, Macbeth enters, knowing he has been defeated, as indicated by his suggestion, and then rejection, of suicide:

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Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On mine own sword? While I see lives, the gashes  
Do better on them.  

(5.8.1-3)

At this point Macduff enters, and unlike Young Siward, he has no doubt whatever as to the identity of his opponent: ". . . Turn, hell-hound, turn" (5.8.3). The first part of their battle commences after only five lines of dialogue, but that, of course, is five more lines than is given to Richard and Richmond. The crucial difference is that in Richard III, as has been argued, the fight is mostly political, while in Macbeth, it is purely personal. Macduff is not there to give Scotland a new king, but to avenge the murder of his family. This deeply personal quality of the forthcoming battle is reinforced by Macbeth's desire to avoid fighting with Macduff; it is, as John Holloway notes, the "one glimpse . . . of something like repentance" we see in Macbeth.14

Macduff fights with either bastard-sword or sword and target, as indicated by his own reference to his sword at 5.8.10. While, as has been noted previously,15 the standard sword, if heavy enough and sharp enough, could shear off a head, Macduff's (offstage) decapitation of Macbeth would be more believable if Macduff were seen fighting with the heavier weapon, held with two hands. In view of Macbeth's comment to Malcolm, "thou losest labor" (5.8.8), as well as Macbeth's unwillingness, under the assumption that he is invulnerable, to injure Macduff, it seems probable that the initial moves of this bout would be essentially a series of furious attacks by Macduff, all of which Macbeth parries with his "warlike shield." It would also be most


15See above, 72.
efficacious for Macbeth's lines (5.8.8-13) to be spoken while Macduff continues his attack, to exploit the excitement and verisimilitude of the simultaneity of fighting with dialogue, a theatrical technique, as noted above,\textsuperscript{16} which appears to have been invented by Shakespeare. Kemble remarks upon Macbeth's attitude remaining one of wishing to avoid the infliction of any further harm upon Macduff:

Unmoved by Macduff's taunts and determined assault, Macbeth counsels him to employ his valour where success may attend on it; and generously warns him not to persist in urging an unequal contest with a foe, whom Destiny had pronounced invincible.\textsuperscript{17} It is only when Macduff says "despair thy charm" (5.8.13) that the fighting would stop (because Macduff stops). The metrics of the exchange offer an opportunity for a moment of vivid theatrics:

\begin{verbatim}
MACD. Despair thy charm, And let the angel whom thou still has served Tell thee Macduff was from his mother's womb Untimely ripped.
MACB. Accursed be the tongue that tells me so ... (5.8.13-17)
\end{verbatim}

There is a six-syllable pause before Macbeth speaks. According to Richard Flatter, it is filled by Macbeth's being set reeling back by the import of Macduff's words.\textsuperscript{18} While this view is reasonable, it is possible that the pause may be imagined as even more effective if one remembers that it is only thirteen lines since Siward and Malcolm entered the castle, and this could therefore be the exact moment at which the alarum bell is silenced, investing the stage with a sudden, total quiet after the great noise of the bell, the cannon-fire, and other sounds of battle. Macbeth's reaction to Macduff's revelation

\textsuperscript{16}See above, 126-28, 153-54.

\textsuperscript{17}Kemble, 83-84.

could then be as Salvini and Kean are reported to have portrayed it: stillness and repose. When Macbeth finally does speak—"accursed be the tongue that tells me so" (5.8.17)—he need not speak above a whisper.

Macbeth instigates the second half of the combat knowing that he is to die fighting; indeed this is the fate he prefers to imprisonment by Malcolm. Therefore, in contrast to the first part of the combat, it is Macbeth who would initiate the attack, and it would be consistent with his character to drive Macduff off the stage, as indicated by F's "exeunt fighting."

We have arrived, then, at the controversial and conflicting stage directions involving Macbeth's death. F shows:

Exeunt fighting. Alarums.
Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slaine.
Retreat and Flourish. Enter with Drumme and Colours, Malcolm, Seyward, Rosse, Thanes, & Soldiers.

(5.8.35.SD)

Various theories have been offered to explain the inconsistency of this action with the need to have Macduff enter with Macbeth's head at 5.9.19. Dyce notes that "the stage directions given by the Ff in this scene are exquisitely absurd," while Clarendon feels it is an indication that other hands were involved in the play's conclusion: "in all likelihood Shakespeare's part in the play ended here." Granville-Barker suggests that Macbeth and Macduff could leave the stage fighting, and then re-appear on the tiring-house gallery, with curtains closing to hide Macbeth's body. Dover Wilson offers a

19Rosenberg, _Masks of Macbeth_, 637.

slightly different idea: they need not go upstairs, but only fight their way to the discovery space, a curtain there serving the same function. John Russell Brown and D.J. Palmer both discount the stage direction calling for the combatants' re-entrance: Brown says simply that they "leave the stage fighting," while Palmer, referring to Macbeth's death as an "offstage event," asserts that the "Macbeth slaine" stage direction "might be taken to indicate that Macbeth is seen to receive a fatal wound in his fight with Macduff, but he does not die on the stage." H.N. Paul argues that Macbeth had to be killed offstage so as not to offend King James with the actual sight of the death of a king, although why James would be offended by a fatal sword-stroke and not by the king's head on a pole goes unexplained.21

Looking amongst some of the better-known modern editions, we find G.L. Kittredge and G.B. Harrison excluding the fighters' re-entrance, while Alfred Harbage (Pelican), Sylvan Barnet (Signet), G.K. Hunter (New Penguin), and Kenneth Muir (New Arden) keep the F stage directions. G. Blakemore Evans in the Riverside edition has "enter fighting and Macbeth slain. Macduff carries in Macbeth's body."

Some of the solutions devised for modern productions are ingenious, e.g. Olivier falling off a flight of steps after receiving the fatal blow, and then being beheaded out of view of the audience,22 but any staging reliant upon proscenium-arch presentation is of little assistance in attempting to discover Shakespeare's intention. If we


22Rosenberg, Masks of Macbeth, 647.
restrict ourselves to the Globe stage, the suggestions of Granville-Barker and Dover Wilson would both be feasible; if one is forced to choose between them, I would prefer to go along with Dover Wilson, as it is hard to justify Granville-Barker's shift in levels on an open battlefield.23

One possibility, of course, is the solution offered for the identical problem in Richard III, the removal of Macbeth's body by standard-bearers. Unfortunately, this action would not be as consistent with the dramatic situation of Macbeth as it would for the earlier play. In Richard III, Richmond, after killing Richard, leaves the stage, separating himself from Richard's body, while in Macbeth, since Macduff is to behead Macbeth, he would stay with the body. It would therefore have to be his standard-bearers who carry Macbeth into the tiring house, but one immediately asks why Macduff would have the body moved only to behead it somewhere else. It would also be more effective, on today's stage as well as in the Globe of 1606, to have Macduff and Macbeth completely alone during this fight, thereby emphasizing the personal nature of the quarrel for Macduff, and the fact that all the thanes have, by this time, left Macbeth.24

I believe that the most likely answer to this puzzle is the one offered by W.W. Greg: that F contains two mutually exclusive endings to Macbeth, and that the irreconcilable stage directions "point to a

23Granville-Barker offers the identical solution for the masking of Young Siward's body. The picture of a curtain being drawn across to hide a corpse and the re-opening of that curtain only to close it again, moments later, for the next corpse, strikes me as potentially comic. More Prefaces, 65-66.

24Richard III is not quite so friendless, as shown by the presence of Catesby and Norfolk in 5.4, just before Richard meets Richmond.
change in the staging," with the directions "inadequately adjusted" before printing. One ending of the play would be without any re-entrance of Macbeth and Macduff after they exit fighting. Indeed this is where the real inconsistency lies, for, as Greg notes, even if we ignore the beheading, it is "pointless" for Macbeth and Macduff to exit fighting, only to re-enter immediately. Therefore, unless there is a missing scene between the exit and re-entrance, either Macbeth and Macduff stay onstage until the fight is over, which is indicative of some 'lost' ending of the play in which Macbeth is not beheaded, or as an alternative, at least when imagining the scene on an Elizabethan stage, one must ignore "enter fighting, and Macbeth slain" in order to have Macbeth's head brought on. Since one would be reluctant to cut 5.9.20-21, my suggestion for the modern director is to have the fight take Macbeth and Macduff offstage, with Macbeth, as noted, the aggressor, and to eliminate the re-entry and onstage death-blow. Whatever solution is decided upon to resolve the textual problem, the fight should show that for this Thane of Cawdor as well as his predecessor, "nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it" (1.4.7-8), as commentators since Schlegel have noted. Hardin Craig's comment offers a particularly clear and forceful example of this


26 Greg, Shakespeare First Folio, 394.

critical viewpoint:

The soul of Macbeth while he lives never disappears completely into the dark, and it heightens his tragedy to realize that, robbed of every reliance, he is still 'Bellona's bridegroom lapped in proof.' Like Richard Crookback he goes out in a burst of immortal bravery. Fear and despair convert to anger and pride, and anger and pride into fearlessness.28

The staging of this swordfight in the modern theatre can only be touched on very briefly; some attention might be given to the opportunity for today's director and lighting designer to evoke the atmosphere of a battle fought in the fading light of dusk or evening. Siward indicates the time of day in 5.6:

Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,  
Let us be beaten if we cannot fight.  

(5.6.7-8)

These lines might best be interpreted as being spoken before nightfall, as Siward is discussing what may happen within the next several hours: if it already is after dark, then the entrance with "drum and colours," as F shows for this scene, would not be completely logical. Also, there is no mention of torches. If the light for the next two scenes, amounting to a combined one hundred and five lines, is seen to be gradually fading, however, it might serve as an interesting reference to 1.6, when, at a similar time of day, Duncan arrived at Macbeth's castle, albeit a different one, and remarked upon the pleasant nature of the setting. Without wishing to make too much of a minor point, it might still be argued that with effective lighting an impression could be given that with the death of Macbeth, once again

. . . the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.  

(1.6.1-3)

28Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, 267.
Appendix: Cymbeline

The Macbeth swordfight brings us to the end of Shakespeare's depiction of military swordfighting in the chronicle plays. This is said with some reluctance—the "Battle of the Narrow Lane" in Cymbeline is an extremely interesting challenge for the director of stage combat, since it probably pits, as does the Oswald-Edgar fight,29 the staff against the sword or rapier.

Although there is a good deal of chronicle material in Cymbeline, and although, it has been argued, King Lear and Troilus and Cressida rightfully belong in this study, I find myself persuaded by Irving Ribner's opinion that the romance elements of Cymbeline so completely outweigh the historical that it must be considered a romance:

"Almost everything, including the historical setting of Roman Britain, is in the play primarily to enhance the romantic qualities of the whole... when we consider Shakespeare's two plays on legendary British history together, the traditional designation of Cymbeline as a romance is completely affirmed."30

G. Wilson Knight is the most notable proponent of the reverse case.31 He considers Cymbeline to be a play which "blend[s] Shakespeare's two primary historical interests, the Roman and the British, which meet here for the first time," and he attaches great importance to Britain's defiance of Rome, a defiance which Shakespeare gives to Cloten and the wicked Queen to proclaim. Wilson Knight argues this view while labelling Cloten as "ridiculous and vicious" and a

29See below, 352-57.


"boastful fool"; at the same time, he compares Cloten's "wit" to that of the Bastard in King John.\textsuperscript{32}

It is not easy to accept Wilson Knight's attempt to account for these supposed inconsistencies in Cloten's character by simply referring to "a certain incompatibility, perhaps."\textsuperscript{33} Nor is it easy to accept his overall view of the play. Cloten is such a "boastful fool," and appears to be even more of one in Shakespeare's intention in that he is particularly boastful about his talents as a fencer and duellist (1.2), that it leads one to agree with Warren D. Smith that Cloten's defiance of Lucius would not have been regarded as patriotic by a Jacobean audience.\textsuperscript{34} Wilson Knight also fails to comment upon the Roman ambassador's laconic responses to the two main speeches Cloten addresses to him; in performance, the actor playing Lucius can effectively puncture Cloten's pomposity by pausing before his terse "so, sir" (3.1.83), and his wry

\begin{quote}
Sir, the event
Is yet to name the winner.
\end{quote}

(3.5.14-15).

As J.M. Nosworthy notes of the historical theme within Cymbeline,

If Shakespeare intended [this] theme to be central, his methods of presentation, with its witch-like Queen, its poisons, its caves, flowers and music, can only be regarded as ludicrous.\textsuperscript{33}

To conclude this necessarily brief discussion by returning to the

\textsuperscript{32}Knight, Crown of Life, 130-34.

\textsuperscript{33}Knight, Crown of Life, p, 136.


comparison of Cymbeline with King Lear, it might be added that just as Nahum Tate made Lear into a romance by adding a love plot, he could have, had he so wished, turned Cymbeline into a history play by eliminating the same type of material, but then not much of the play would be left.
CHAPTER XII

TOURNEYS AND FORMAL COMBATS

The plays of Shakespeare contain only three swordfights that are actually fought as the result of a formal challenge to either trial by battle or some form of sporting contest,¹ and in each case the circumstances of the challenge are different: the tournament foot combat of Hector and Ajax in Troilus and Cressida, the trial by battle of Edgar and Edmund in King Lear, and the fencing match in Hamlet. The last is outside the scope of this study; the first two require careful analysis.

The Tournament Foot Combat in Troilus and Cressida

The basic form of the Hector-Ajax fight as a tournament foot combat has been discussed at length above; we might now investigate the manner of its original staging. It has been argued throughout this study that Shakespeare's depiction of medieval combat would be accurate in terms of the appearance, if not the actual design, of armor and weaponry. Furthermore, the skillful use of those weapons by Burbage, Sly, and their colleagues would make the visual element of

¹There are four, if one considers the Joan-Dauphin fight in 1 Henry VI (1.2) as belonging in this category. As that combat does not comfortably fit any classification within our taxonomy of stage swordfighting, it is discussed in an appendix to this chapter.
Shakespeare's historiography a consistent complement to the oral. If this argument is granted as valid, and with it the argument that Troilus and Cressida, although depicting events in a mythical past more than two millennia before the middle ages, does so in a chivalric context, then the obvious starting point in a search for the Elizabethan staging of a tournament foot combat would be descriptions of such combats as they actually occurred.²

A look at the weaponry of tournament foot combats reveals the immediate possibility that further discussion in this study could be inappropriate, for a strong case could be pleaded that Hector and Ajax fight not with swords, but axes, whose use in tournament foot combats is often described in the historical literature, some of the more notable examples coming from the era of Henry VI.³

In 1465 the Bastard of Burgundy was challenged by Anthony Rivers,

²I believe Gary Taylor's suggestion, made in a 1982 essay, that the fight is offstage, to be intriguing but incorrect. Taylor’s perceived difficulties of the preparations for the combat proceeding on one part of the stage while Agamemnon and Ulysses converse elsewhere (4.5.94-112) may be discounted, as such sequences are easily achieved on the large Elizabethan stage, and Agamemnon's "they are in action" (4.5.113) is not superfluous, as Taylor suggests it is, if the fight is visible to the audience. Rosalind and Celia comment on Orlando's wrestling (AYLI. 1.2.213-14) in a fashion similar to that of the Greeks and Trojans in this play. Taylor's comparison to the offstage lists in Richard II is not valid, as the Richard II trial by battle is to commence on horseback, while Agamemnon's "his blows are well disposed" (4.5.116) shows that this combat is on foot. If this single combat were to be "seen" by the characters on stage and not by the audience, it would be the only one in Shakespeare to make use of this most "un-Shakespearian"—at least as far as swordfighting is concerned—convention, with the exception of Julius Caesar (5.3.20-32), where Pindarus reports the death of Titinius. In that sequence, however, Shakespeare first clearly establishes that Pindarus is to climb a hill in order to see the fight. Finally, the re-entrance of Diomedes, Aeneas, Hector, and Ajax, before it is decided to stop the combat, is rendered quite illogical. Taylor, "Troilus and Cressida: Bibliography, Performance, and Interpretation," 114-15.

Lord Scales, and the engagement, fought at Smithfield, is recorded by Hall:

... the two noble men came into the feld on fote, with to Poleaxes, and there fought valiantly lyke to coragious champions, but at the laste, the point of the axe of the lord Scales happened to enter into the sight of the healme of the bastard, & by fyne force might have plucked hym on his knees, the kynge sodaynely caste doune his warden, and then the Marshalls them severed.4

Such combats continued into a later period. Hall describes Henry VIII's efforts in a tournament of October, 1510:

... the kyng not mynded to se yong Gentelmen, unexpert in marciall feates, caused a place to be prepared within the parke of Grenewyche for the Quene and the ladies to stande and se the fighte with battaill axes that should be done there, where the king hym self armed, faught with one Gyot, a gentleman of Almayne, a talle man, and a good man of armes.5

As the Smithfield combat shows, these axe-fights, even with bated weapons, would have been extraordinarily dangerous. On top of the axe's staff was a spike for thrusting, and opposite the blade there would be either another spike or a mallet. The staff would be approximately four feet long and be held in two hands; according to Dillon, either end of it could be used for blows or thrusts in a fight.6

If the Elizabethan Hector and Ajax did fight with axes, there is every reason to imagine the combat, even though sporting, as being spectacular and exciting to witness. The frightening appearance of the weapons would in itself lend a tense air to the engagement, and the

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4Hall, 268. Richard II does the same to interrupt the Bolingbroke-Mowbray trial by battle (R2, 1.3.118). It is inevitable that many of the procedures of tournament combat would be indentical to those of trial by battle, but the two forms of combat should not be confused.

5Hall, 515.

6Dillon, "Barriers and Foot Combats," 280, plates facing 276; Dillon, "On a MS. Collection," plate 6; Norman, Arms and Armour 91.
fact that these cousins are not out to kill or even injure one another would not detract from this tension. Commentators such as Seltzer, McAlindon, and Danson, who see this fight as a "red herring" or an "anti-climax," appear to do so only because it is a sporting, rather than a deadly, combat, but this view is incorrect; while not everyone enjoys combat sports such as boxing, the enthusiasm of those who do is not dampened by the (theoretically) non-lethal nature of the sport, and fortunately it is the rare spectator who wants to see a boxer badly beaten. The same, of course, is true of the various forms of fencing, and it has been argued above that the Elizabethans would have been keen followers of such combat sports, and would have associated them with the playhouses where bouts were often held.

Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to create a description of a supposed Hector-Ajax combat with axes by referring to the account of the engagement of 11 July, 1443, between Pierre de Bauffremont, Lord de Charny, and Pietre Vasque de Saavedra, as described in the memoirs of Ollivier de la Marche (d. 1522).

The Spaniard, a shortish but stout man, held his axe, with the hammer head advanced in front of his face, as a sort of guard, while Charny, a tall and powerful knight, held his axe with the lower end upward, close to his body, ready for attack or defence. To commence Saavedra struck Charny on the right hand to make him drop his axe, but unsuccessfully, for Charny parried the blow with the lower end of his axe, and stepping forward struck close to the Spaniard's foot with the lower end. Twice Charney struck at his foot and good blows were given. Charny receiving one on the large garde de bras of the left arm, while he struck the edge of Saavedra's helmet close to his face with the bottom spike of the axe. So they fought on hotly and bravely, until the fifteen strokes, as agreed, had been delivered. The Duke cast down his bâton and the men-at-arms and scouts as arranged separated the fighters.

7 See also above, 253-54, and La Branche, 445.

8 Quoted Dillon, "Barriers and Foot Combats," 284-85. La Marche must have seen the fight as a boy; Dillon notes that he mentions that it was the first such combat he witnessed.
One need only substitute Hector and Ajax for Charney and Saavedra, or for the Bastard and Lord Scales in the previous example, to realize that such a combat, if simulated effectively on stage, would be an exciting spectacle.

What are the arguments against axes, and for swords? Textual indications are few: we find that Agamemnon refers to the "strokes" of the weapons (4.5.93), and during the fight says "his blows are well disposed. There, Ajax" (4.5.116). "Strokes" and "blows" are normally associated with sword-and-shield fencing, where thrusts would be uncommon, but as the terms would not be inconsistent with the use of battle-axes, a firm conclusion may not be reached. Further to this point, no specificity regarding weapons may be attached to Agamemnon's "there, Ajax," which is, in modern editions, followed by an exclamation point, a justified editorial inference as it makes Agamemnon's exhortation to Ajax so similar to that of many spectators at a sporting contest: the "there" is advice as to where the next blow or stroke should be directed.9

As was argued for Richard III, the main reason it is more likely that Hector and Ajax fought with swords rather than axes is practical: the actors are presumed to have been competent, perhaps brilliant fencers, but expert use of a battle-axe is a different matter,10

If the Hector-Ajax combat was (and is) to be fought with swords, either a bastard-sword or sword and target would be historically appropriate, as combats of both sorts were common in tournaments.11

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9Agamemnon's calling out is yet another reason why this combat must not be seen as a mortal one. It will be shown below that in a trial by battle any comment from a spectator was strictly prohibited.

10See above, 184-86.

11Dillon, "Barriers and Foot Combats," 284-300.
The Hector-Ajax combat would be quite different from the fencing match in *Hamlet*, in which the objective is to score a hit by "touching" the legal target area on the person of one's opponent. In tournament foot combats, whether using axe or sword, the objective was to disarm one's opponent, or to beat him to the ground—it appears that there is some similarity between foot combats and modern boxing, with its "knock-downs." Enguerrand de Monstrelet's *Chronicles*, which Hall used as a source, give the rules for the contest of Lord De Charny and another Spaniard, Jehan de Merlo:

Sir John de Mello, a very renowned knight banneret of Spain, appellant, without any defamatory quarrel, but solely to acquire honour, against Pierre de Bauffremont, lord of Charny . . . the terms were to break three lances only. When the lord de Charny had acceded to this request, he in turn demanded from the Spanish knight a combat on foot with battle-axes, swords, and daggers, until one of them should lose his arms, or place his hands on his knees, or on the ground—subject, however, in all cases, to the decisions of the judges of the field.

This style of fighting, as has been noted, would render the thrust of the sword an ineffective technique; indeed, thrusting, or "foining," was sometimes explicitly forbidden at foot combats. *The Book of Certaine Triumphes* sets down the rules for the tournament in honor of the marriage of Richard, son of Edward IV, to Anne Mowbray:

He that first wrote his name for striking with the sword shall beginne, and he and his fellowe to strike Thirteen stroakes betwixt them at their advantages all maner of wayes except the foyne, and there shall be none laye hande on other.

On the basis of the example of this combat, and the above mentioned


14 Quoted Cripps-Day, xlv. The groom was one of the princes supposedly murdered in the Tower; he would have been about seven years old at his wedding.
Charny-Saavedra one, it might be argued that Hector and Ajax pause because a prescribed number of strokes has been given.

The text of *Troilus and Cressida* is of little assistance in determining the length of the Hector-Ajax combat. At the end of Ulysses' speech describing Troilus to Agamemnon, both Q and F read:

*Alarum.*

AGAM. They are in action.
NEST. Now, Ajax, hold thine own!
TRO. Hector, thou sleepest.
     Awake thee!
AGAM. His blows are well dispos'd. There, Ajax!

*Trumpets cease*

DIO. You must no more.
AENE. Princes, enough, so please you.
AJAX. I am not warm yet, let us fight again.

(4.5.113-119)

The impression gained from reading the text is one of an extremely short bout, but the actors could have extended the fight as long as desired between Troilus' and Agamemnon's lines, and again between those of Agamemnon and Diomedes. The arguments against this happening are the stage directions before and after the fighting: "alarum" and "trumpets cease." It is difficult to know what to make of them; they may indeed indicate the continuous sound of trumpets right through the combat, which would lead one to assume that the fighting could not go on for a very long time without putting a strain on the trumpeters', and the audience's, endurance. Nevertheless this could have been the practice in the Elizabethan theatre, for in the battle of chivalry between Edmund and Edgar in *King Lear* (5.3), just before the fighting is to commence Edmund orders "Trumpets, speak!" (5.3.150), which is followed in F by a stage direction for "alarums." Although *King Lear*
does not have a similar stage direction for the trumpeters to "cease," and although the trial by battle as seen there is a very different thing from this tournament foot combat, it is possible that it was the customary practice of the Elizabethan theatre to back single combat with the uninterrupted alarums of the trumpeters, or perhaps to have a second flourish to end the fight, although reading the "trumpets cease" of Troilus and Cressida as "trumpets sound a 'cease' flourish" does appear to be in some defiance of simple English.15

What is the comparative skill and strength of the two combatants? Nass argues:

The spectators' shouts, from which we must infer what happens, indicate that Hector does fight sluggishly. Not surprisingly, Troilus is more concerned with honor than harmony, and for appearance's sake urges his brother on: 'Hector, thou sleepest. Awake thee!' (4.5.114-15). Missing, as it were, the cues for a milder confrontation is Ajax. His 'well-disposed' blows praised by Agamemnon (4.5.116) suggest that he battles vigorously. Perhaps seeing the danger this zeal poses, Diomedes and Aeneas interrupt the duel and call for its end. The responsibility for terminating the combat nevertheless rests fully with Hector, particularly since Ajax protests 'I am not warm yet, let us fight again' (4.5.118). . . the effect of prematurely concluding the combat is disconcerting: we expect a fierce duel to take place and are disappointed when it does not.16

Nass may be challenged on several points. First, while it might be true that Hector is fighting sluggishly at the moment Troilus calls out, Troilus' remark could also be a reaction to Hector's gaining the upper hand through his strength and skill, only to fail to capitalize upon his advantage, either because he wants to fight on a bit longer, or, as is said of him in a different context on the battlefield (5.3.39-42), because he does not wish to humiliate or injure an

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15 There is no trumpet call indicated to end the Hector-Ajax combat in Heywood's The Iron Age.

16 Nass, 6.
opponent who has proved himself worthy. Second, while the audience is
indeed expecting a "fierce duel" [sic], there is no reason, as argued
above, to assume that that is not what it sees. Third, while the
inference that Diomedes and Aeneas interrupt the fight because of
possible danger to Hector is reasonable, it is equally possible that by
this point the greater danger could be to Ajax.

Diomedes would stop the combat by casting an arrow\textsuperscript{17} or a baton to
the ground, and Aeneas, as the second marshall, asks them to
discontinue the fighting at that point, rather then go on to a second
bout: "enough, so please you" (4.5.117-18). Aeneas' request is in
itself an argument for a furious clash of weapons. He delivered the
original challenge, and is himself a chivalrous knight; therefore if he
has not called a halt because the agreed number of strokes has been
given, it is unlikely there could be a reason other than that the
warriors have already shown impressive skill, or that the fighting has
become so energetic there is real danger of an injury, or both. In
this respect, Nass's suggestion that Aeneas asks for a halt to avoid
injury to Hector is not consistent with his idea of a lackluster fight.

Hector, as Nass observes, does make the decision to discontinue
after one bout, and his comments offer some further clues as to the
nature of the combat. His decision is first prompted by the
realization that

The obligation of our blood forbids
A gory emulation 'twixt us twain.

(4.5.122-23)

"Gory emulation" is another indication that the combat is violent
enough to threaten harm to the participants. Hector then goes on to

\textsuperscript{17}Lord de Charny's fight with de Merlo (see above, 314) was
stopped when "the Duke threw down his arrow and cried "Hola!"" Dillon,
"Barriers and Foot Combats," 283.
praise Ajax for his "lusty arms"; while he is, of course, being
chivalrous, he also might be sincere, and this tournament combat
between Hector and Ajax might be similar to those on the famous Field
of the Cloth of Gold in 1521, when the kings of England and France, as
told by Hall, "fought with suche force that the fier sprang out of
their armure."18

As Ajax's claim that he "came to kill" Hector has already been
discussed, only one more point requires comment: the possible use of
lists or barriers on the Elizabethan stage. Malone inserts a stage
direction at 4.5.93 which reads "Hector and Ajax enter the lists."19
Would such lists, of a temporary nature, have been erected? While
possible, it is improbable, for if lists were ever used by Shakespeare,
it seems odd that they are not mentioned in a stage direction in either
Q or F of Troilus and Cressida or King Lear (5.3). Although the Herald
in King Lear mentions lists when he reads out Albany's charge of
treason against Edmund (5.3.111), this is more likely to be a typical
example of Shakespeare's setting of the scene by the description the
characters offer.

It seems doubtful, for the same reason, that barriers, the waist-
high railings that were sometimes used in foot combats as a safety
measure, were seen on the Shakespearean stage. Although super-
numeraries would have ample time to erect and then dismantle them, the
effectiveness or verisimilitude of the scene does not in any way depend
on their presence.20

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18 Hall, 618.

19 Malone's stage direction is adopted by Muir in the Oxford
Troilus and Cressida (1982).

20 Hall and Holinshed, in describing foot combats, often mention
Just as Troilus and Cressida shows Shakespeare's use of many elements of the tournament foot combat, we find, when turning to King Lear, that the Edgar-Edmund fight of 5.3 is another such careful depiction of an interesting feature of the same historical period: trial by battle, also called "trial by combat," "battle of chivalry" and "judicial combat."

Commentators have employed a variety of terms to describe this combat in King Lear. A.S. Cairncross, Leo Kirschbaum, and Paul N. Siegel call it a "trial by combat," while Bridget Gellert Lyons uses both "trial by combat" and "chivalric duel." Rosalie L. Colie employs "trial at arms," Helen Gardner "stage tournament," Thomas P. Roche "chivalric combat," and Fitzroy Pyle, Marvin Rosenberg, and John Simon call it simply a "duel."21

It has been noted above that the term "duel" is inappropriate for the single combats in such plays as Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida, but in the context of King Lear there is some justification for using it. Scottish legal historian George Neilson, in his book Trial by

Combat, employs the somewhat clumsy term "treason-duel of chivalry" for engagements of this sort, and he refers at some length to the famous, aborted combat of 1398 between Bolingbroke and Mowbray at Coventry. While Neilson is employing a modern English term for a phenomenon which pre-dates it, his approach is that of a legal historian, and he is not primarily concerned, as we must be, with the implications of each word as it might be interpreted by the modern readers, commentators, and theatrical practitioners who, either in their imaginations or physically on the stage, wish to re-enact the combat accurately. This is particularly important in the case of King Lear: the Edgar-Edmund fight and the exact manner of its staging contain important clues which lead to a clearer appreciation of both the historical setting of the play and the characters of the combatants.

When Edgar approaches Albany before the battle with Cordelia's army and hands him a written message, he sets in motion a complex legal procedure, and Shakespeare, with allowances for condensing a long process into one dramatic scene, follows with surprising fidelity the tenets of the High Court of Chivalry, an Anglo-French institution established in the reign of Edward III as part of the neo-chivalric revival which also saw the founding of the Order of the Garter.

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,

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22George Neilson, Trial by Combat (Glasgow: William Hodge, 1890), 190-92.

23G.D. Squibb notes that charges of attempted murder, speaking in a manner which tends to the abuse, scandal, or disparagement of the king, and surrendering a castle to the enemy without good cause were some of the other charges which the High Court of Chivalry occasionally heard. G.D. Squibb, The High Court of Chivalry: A Study of Civil Law in England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 24.
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouched there.  

(5.1.40-44)

The use of the word "champion," and, it will be seen, the instruction
to "let the trumpet sound," indicate that Edgar will do more than
produce a witness; he assumes that his accusation will have to be
proved in trial by battle. When Albany arrests Edmund and Goneril on a
charge of "capital treason" (5.3.82-84),24 he himself is to offer proof
in the appropriate manner should no other appellant appear:

Thou art armed, Gloucester, let the trumpet sound.
If none appear to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge.  

(5.3.90-93)

At this point, as shown by a stage direction which Malone and modern
editors after him correctly insert, Albany "throws down a glove."

After the remainder of Albany's charge and two short interjections from
Regan and Goneril, Edmund immediately answers the challenge by throwing
his glove to the stage floor:

There's my exchange. What in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by the trumpet; he that dares approach:
On him, on you—who not?—I will maintain
My truth and honor firmly.  

(5.3.97-101)

It is unclear how and when the charge which the Herald reads is
written down; it would have nothing to do with the paper Edgar hands
Albany, which is either Goneril's letter to Edmund taken from Oswald,
or Edgar's own "summary" of it. There is not necessarily an

24G.T. Buckley's discussion of the charge of treason against
Edmund appears to be written under the assumption that an Elizabethan
audience would only be able to appreciate the accuracy of the charge as
it related to Elizabethan law, while our assumption is that
Shakespeare's audience could relate to the episode in its historical
context. G.T. Buckley, "Was Edmund Guilty of Capital Treason?"
Shakespeare Quarterly 23 (1972): 87-94.
incongruity, however, as the only words that need be written for the
Herald are the name of the defendant, and perhaps one or two words as
to the nature of the charge; everything else might reasonably be
assumed to be pro forma.

When Edgar, wearing a closed helmet to hide his identity, appears
at the third sound of the trumpet, he is formally questioned by the
Herald as to his quality, and after claiming that he is as "noble as
the adversary" he comes "to cope" (5.3.123-24), Edgar repeats his ap-
peal of treason to Edmund's face. Edmund, in his defiant reply, says,

In wisdom I should ask thy name,
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.

(5.3.142-46)

Both Q and F have the comma after "knighthood," showing the connection
between F's "rule of knighthood" ("right of knighthood" in Q) and the
fact that since the mysterious challenger has no proof of his quality,
Edmund is not required to answer the charge until the challenger's
right to engage in a chivalric trial is established; this point might
be slightly reinforced if modern editions (and productions) employed
Q's "right" instead of F's "rule." Edmund's justifiable mention of
this right he does not choose to claim brings the initial procedure of
5.3 to a close.

A look at the two other instances of trial by battle in Shake-
speare—Richard II (1.1. and 1.3) and 2 Henry VI (2.3)—might
illuminate the Lear episode. Graham Holderness uses the trial of
Bolingbroke and Mowbray in Richard II to demonstrate Shakespeare's
"conscious historiography," portraying English history in a distinctly
feudal, rather than Elizabethan, mode:

... the appeal of treason and consequent trial by battle are
stages of a legal process, conducted in the Court of Chivalry,
according to definite procedures which Shakespeare appears to have known and understood. The sense of legal procedures being followed in this initial meeting of the earls [1.1] is absent from any of the sources; it is Shakespeare's invention, and it shows the king adhering to procedures which (though odd indeed from the point of view of modern law, and clearly enough distinguishable from Elizabethan justice) according to feudal law are conducted with perfect propriety.  

In a detailed analysis of Bolingbroke's charge and Mowbray's denial, Holderness correctly notes that Mowbray is not obliged to defend himself verbally, but may simply remain silent without any presumption of guilt until his innocence or guilt is proved in the lists. The one comment of Holderness which might be questioned is his assertion that the sense of legal procedures is absent from any of the sources, and is "Shakespeare's invention." The one legal authority Holderness cites is G.D. Squibb, but Holderness, as does Squibb, refers to the Ordeanaunce and Fourme of Fightying Within Listes which was written by Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, and presented to his nephew Richard II upon the occasion of his coronation, a circumstance, as Holderness notes, which is "replete with historical ironies." In 1918 Francis Henry Cripps-Day observed that Shakespeare would probably have seen the Ordinance, "which from the existence of so large a number of MSS., we may assume to have been well known," and while not consistent in every detail, the legal procedures in 1.1 and 1.3 of Richard II follow the Ordinance quite closely, giving it some status as a "source" of the play.

25 Holderness, 45.

26 Holderness, 46-51, 229; Thomas of Woodstock, "The Ordeanaunce and Fourme of Fightyng Within Listes," in The Black Book of the Admiralty, ed. Sir Travers Twiss, 2 vols. (London: Longman & Co., 1871), 2:300-329. Cripps-Day, 74. The Ordinance, as it hereinafter shall be called, is in French; quotations are from an English translation (Landsdowne MS. 285, f. 11) of uncertain date, but no later than the 16th century, and possibly far earlier. In the Black Book, the French and English versions are printed on facing pages. Cripps-Day, 74.
Richard II shows Bolingbroke's challenge and Mowbray's acceptance (1.1.69-83), and after the King's fruitless and not necessarily sincere attempt at reconciliation, the setting of the time, place, and weapons for the combat:

At Coventry, upon St. Lambert's Day,
There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
The swelling difference of your settled hate.

(1.1.199-201)

The Woodstock Ordinance shows that in appeals of treason,

In first the quarell and the billes of the appellant and of the defendant shall be [sic] pletid in the court before the constable and marshall, and when they may not preve their cause by wittes nor by noon oothir maner but determyne ther quarell by strength, the toon to preve his entent upon the toothir, and the toothir in the same maner to defende hym.

Then the Constable

... shall assigne them a day and place ... than he shall awarde them poyntis of armys, othirwise callid wepons, aither of them shall have a longe swerde, a shorte swerde, a dagger.

Although Shakespeare, for very good dramatic reasons, follows Hall and Holinshed in placing the appeal before the King instead of the Constable, and although Richard refers to lances as well as to swords and daggers, the scene still may be said to follow the Ordinance in terms of its legal structure.

Holderness does not discuss 1.3, the meeting of Bolingbroke and Mowbray at Coventry, in any detail. In this scene, Shakespeare, in following Holinshed closely, also follows Thomas of Woodstock. Like Edgar (5.2.119-21), each combatant is in turn questioned by the Marshall as to his identity and his reason for appearing in the lists (1.3.11-41), whereupon the Marshall proclaims,

27Twiss, ed., 2:305.

28Hall, 3; Holinshed, 2:844-46.
On pain of death, no person be so bold
Or daring-hardy as to touch the lists,
Except the Marshall and such officers
Appointed to direct these fair designs.

(1.3.42-45)

The King's interruption of the combat, in this context an act
which turns out to carry grave consequences, is justified under the law. Neilson notes that such combats were often stopped by the King, who would then, as Richard does here, give judgement.29

A comparison of this trial and the one in 2 Henry VI, where an armorer named Thomas Horner is accused of treason by his man Peter, also shows how accurate Shakespeare is in depicting legal combats. For this trial, both F and the reported text show, except for variations in spelling:

Enter at one Doore the Armorer and his Neighbors, drinking to him so much, that he is drunke; and he enters with a Drumme before him, and his Staffe, with a Sand-bagge fastened to it; and at the other Doore his Man, with a Drumme and Sand-bagge, and Prentices drinking to him.

(2.3.59,SD)

In both versions, the inebriated Horner is easily defeated by his servant, and confesses his treason before he dies (2.3.94).30

The detail of this somewhat ludicrous fight requiring comment is the weaponry: both combatants use staffs, which places the episode in a legal tradition entirely different from the one shown in Richard II. As Horner and Peter are commoners, they would have no standing in the High Court of Chivalry; their encounter is a "duel of law," also commonly referred to as the "judicial duel," although Shakespeare simply calls it a "single combat" (2H6. 1.3.208). This form of trial

29Neilson, 188-90.

30Earlier in the Contention, Duke Humphrey orders that the combat will be with "Eben [ebony] staves and Standbags" [sic]. Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto, 50 r.
is far older than the battle of chivalry; cases are recorded in England as early as the eleventh century, and the custom existed even until the reign of Charles I, with a civil case involving one Ralph Claxton against one Richard Lilburn. A most interesting Elizabethan example is that of 1571 involving Thomas Paramour, the defendant in a writ of right (civil suit), who demanded single combat, in which he would be represented by a champion, George Thorne, against the plaintiff's champion, Henry Nailor, who was, as Wickham observes, a well-known master of defense.31

Such single combats in a writ of right, as Neilson notes, were always fought with a staff and shield, but Shakespeare could not have learned this from either Fabyan, Hall, or Holinshed, all of whom describe the incident upon which the combat in 2 Henry VI is obviously based without reference to the weapons employed;32 he would therefore have to have attained his knowledge of the appropriate weaponry independently of those sources. It is possible that Shakespeare's depiction of the combat was inspired by the Paramour case, as the account of it in Stow's Annales is very similar, except for the drunkenness, to the episode in 2 Henry VI. Stow reads:

Thorne was there in the morning timely. Nailor about 7 of the clocke came through London, appareled in a dublet and galeygascoigne breeches, all of crimosin satten cut and raced, a hat of blace velvet with a red feather and band, before him drums and fifes playing; the gauntlet that was cast downe by George Thorne, was borne before the sayd Nailor upon a swords point, and


his batton (a staffe an elle long, made Taper-wise, tipped with horn) with his shield of hard leather, was borne after him.33

The sandbags in 2 Henry VI are another indication of Shakespeare's familiarity with the legal detail of trial by combat, for there is historical record of their use. Although I have not been able to find any such record before 1590, there is a most interesting description of the abovementioned Claxton-Lilburn trial of 1638 in the Historical Collections of John Rushworth (1680):

. . . both Parties brought their Champions into the Court of Durham, having Sand-bags and Battoons, and so tendred themselves in that fighting posture: But the Court upon reading the Record, found an Error in it, committed by a mistake of the Clerk, (some thought wilfully done) whereupon the Court would not let them join Battel at that time.34

This comparison of Richard II, 2 Henry VI, and King Lear shows that the legal procedures and the basic form of combat in Richard II and King Lear are virtually identical, the only essential difference being that the one in King Lear is not interrupted. This has the effect of placing at least one important part of the play in a late medieval setting, which, on the face of it, appears to be at odds with the early pagan character of the Lear legend. Bridget Gellert Lyons remarks upon this apparent inconsistency:

Like the curious scene on Dover cliff, the combat--chivalric and medieval--is out of keeping with the main story of King Lear. In the scene the idea of justice is rendered in the archaic mode of the romances.35

Lyons' mention of "the romances" is, of course, a reference to the commonly accepted view that the main source of the subplot involving Gloucester and his sons is Sidney's Arcadia, an "archaic mode" which

33Stow, Annales, 1133.
34Rushworth, 2:789.
35Lyons, 32.
would indeed be difficult to join with what is considered the most important source of the main story, The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir, without some incongruities presenting themselves. While no one would sensibly claim that The True Chronicle History and Arcadia were not known by Shakespeare and used in composing King Lear, it may still be argued that the formative influence of those works has been overestimated, and that the English chronicles are a more important direct source of King Lear than is generally recognized. Lear, his daughters, and his sons-in-law are all mentioned in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Holinshed, Warner's Albion's England, and the Faerie Queene, and the broad outline of Shakespeare's Lear follows the earlier versions; the Fool is Shakespeare's invention, and while Kent is in many respects similar to Perillus of Leir, Shakespeare cannot be said to have depended on the earlier play for the character.

Sir Philip Sidney's story of the Paphlagonian king, deceived and blinded by his bastard son, and led and supported by his faithful legitimate son, is the obvious source of the Gloucester subplot, but some of the details may have come from other works. Geoffrey Bullough writes that "the chivalric fights in Arcadia suggested the trial by combat between Edgar and Edmund," a point of view also held by Fitzroy Pyle, who argues,

The introduction (though not the conduct) of the duel governed by rule of knighthood (so little in keeping with the manners and atmosphere of the play) may surely be traced to preoccupation with the chivalric Arcadia, where there are battles between Plexirtus and Leonatus (the prototypes of Edmund and Edgar), a duel to the death between the two brothers Tydeus and Telenor, and a reply from Amphialus to the Forsaken Knight's challenge which has a touch suggestive of Edmund's reply to Edgar's.36

This view is difficult to accept. While the Edgar-Oswald fight might

36Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources 7:284; Pyle, 453.
have been inspired by the somewhat similar circumstances of the attack which Plexurtus and forty followers make upon Leonatus, who is helped by Pyrocles and Musidorus, none of the combats in Arcadia cited by Pyle resembles the battle of chivalry between Edgar and Edmund in its legal aspects.

An equally unlikely proposal is made by Andrew S. Cairncross, who argues that cantos four to six of Orlando Furioso are not only the inspiration for the Hero-Claudio theme in Much Ado About Nothing, but for the Edgar-Edmund combat as well, and that since some of the details of the combat are not in Harington's translation, it is proved that Shakespeare read Ariosto in the original Italian:

The similarities between Lear and Ariosto are striking: chiefly the combat of two brothers, one a villain, the other 'unknown,' the 'third sound of the trumpet,' the defeat, confession, and death of the villain; and the revelation of identity. Cairncross seems unaware of the ubiquity in romantic literature of a combat between one who has slandered a lady and the lady's disguised defender; indeed, the circumstances of the Renaldo-Polynesso and Lurcanio-Ardiodant combats, fought to prove Guinevere's honor, are very similar to that between Sir Madore and the disguised Launcelot in Malory. The relevant detail cited by Cairncross which is not in Harington, but is in Ariosto and in Lear, is the "third sound of the trumpet," but Shakespeare did not need Ariosto for this idea. Thomas of Woodstock's Ordinance instructs that the defendant in a battle of treason shall be formally summoned three times, and three times only, before it may be assumed that he will not honor his pledge to appear:


And yf it be soo that the defendant come nat, the conestable shall commaunde the marshall to make calle hym at the fourc corners of the listes, which shalbe be doon in maner as it folowith. Oyez. Oyez. Oyez . . . defendant come to your iourney, which ye have undirtake at this day for to acqyte your pleggz before the kyng, the conestable and marshall in yowre defence ayenst . . . appellaunt, of that time he hath put up on you. And yf he come not betyme, he shalbe callid the seconde time in the same maner; and at the ende he shall say, Come, the day passeth fast. And yf he come nat at that tyme he shalbe callid the thrid tyme.39

Woodstock was himself constable of one of the most celebrated battles of chivalry of the fourteenth century: that between Sir John Annesley, appellant, and his squire, Thomas Katrington, defendant. In that combat, as Thomas of Walsingham records, the defendant appeared, like the appellant Edgar of King Lear, at the third call of the herald's trumpet—"hoc autem tertio voce praeconis bellici factum fuit."40

Neither Sidney nor Ariosto, then, is the source, in any real sense, of the trial by battle; one then concludes that it has no direct source, but that Shakespeare invented the episode as the most suitable means of resolving the narrative, and, in doing so, drew on the many formal combats with which he was familiar from his reading of Froissart, Hall, and Holinshed, as well as (possibly) the Ordinance of Thomas of Woodstock or other legal papers.

It is appropriate that the combat is drawn, in this general sense, from the chronicles; in many respects King Lear is, as the title of Q advertises, a "Chronicle Historie." Hardin Craig discusses the central concern of King Lear:

39 Twiss, ed., 2:311. Edgar is, of course, the appellant, not the defendant, but the structure of the scene requires his entrance to be the one commanded by the Herald; Edmund has not left the stage.

It is authority. King Lear is, first of all, a play about kingship; about a trustful old king, every inch a king, who in old age brings destruction to himself, and to certain persons in his own circle, and to his country.41

Writing in agreement with Craig, Irving Ribner cites Edward III as a play which, like Lear, has a fictitious subplot, but must still be considered a historical play.42 It could be argued, however, that Ribner need not have gone beyond Shakespeare for an example of the extensive use of fictitious material in a history, for what is the Falstaff plot if not a fictitious addition to Henry IV?

John F. Danby, in Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, makes constant allusion to the two tetralogies and to King John as plays which explore the same themes as does King Lear, particularly in the chapter on "Edmund's Ancestry," while Maynard Mack also offers some cogent reasons for considering Lear a history play:

Though King Lear is not a political play, and obviously has heights and depths undreamed of in the histories, the analysis of authority still occupies a considerable place in it, and motifs come repeatedly to the surface that belong far more to Shakespeare's own historical enterprises than to the True Chronicle History of King Leir.43

Indeed, it is possible that in composing his own "Chronicle Historie," Shakespeare used not only the Lear story in Holinshed, but went elsewhere in the Chronicles for elements of the Gloucester plot, a point which is of importance to an explication of the trial by battle: F.T. Flahiff offers a very persuasive view that the Edgar of King Lear is based, in part, on the Saxon King Edgar, whose story is told by Holinshed, Higden, and other chroniclers. Citing Sir Thomas Elyot's

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41Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare (Columbia, Mo.: Lucas Brothers, 1948), 208.

42Ribner, 247-53.

43Danby, 57-101; Maynard Mack, King Lear in Our Time (London: Methuen, 1966), 57.
The Boke of the Governour (1531), Flahiff argues that the idea of a "King Edgar" ruling over post-Lear Britain would, for an Elizabethan audience, carry with it strong connotations of the "renewal and consolidation" which Elyot attributed to Edgar's wise rule. While recognizing that his hypothesis might appear far-fetched to some, he notes:

Shakespeare has introduced 'christian' names into the Lear story, the names of Edgar, Edmund, and Oswald. They are unlike the given names of Lear and his daughters in that they are Saxon names, and willy-nilly, they occur in the history of King Edgar. His father's name was Edmund, and one of those who figured prominently at his coronation was Oswald, Archbishop of York. He had, moreover, a wicked brother.  

As Flahiff observes, Shakespeare refers to the Edgar story in 2 Henry IV, when the dying king, in urging his son to adopt virtuous ways, says:

What wilt thou [England] do when riot is thy care?  
O, thou wilt be a wilderness again,  
Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants!  

(4.5.135-37)

Higden relates, as does Holinshed after him, how Edgar rid Britain of wolves by demanding that the Welsh pay their tribute to him in wolveskins.  

To read Holinshed's account of the reigns of Edmund, Edward, and Edgar is to become immediately aware of how closely Shakespeare must

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44 F.T. Flahiff, "Edgar, Once and Future King," in Some Facets of King Lear, ed. Colie and Flahiff, 233-34. Flahiff emphasizes that he is not proposing that Shakespeare's Edgar is the Saxon King Edgar; only that many facets of his character appear to be too similar for it to be only a coincidence of having the same name. See also Thomas Elyot, The Book Named the Governor, 1531, English Linguistics 1500-1800, vol. 246 (Menston, England: Scolar Press, 1970), ff. 12 v.-13 v.

have read it. Holinshed relates that in A.D. 946 Edmund apprehended the two sons of King Dunmaile of Cumberland "and caused their eies to be put out," later awarding Cumberland to Malcolm. There is also material relating to Hamlet: the Danes in England prospered under Edgar, and Holinshed, again after Higden, records "for wheras the Danes by nature were great Drinkers, the Englishmen by continual conversation with them learned the same vice." Holinshed has an account of a challenge to single combat involving Edgar: upon hearing of some insulting remarks made of him by King Kenneth of Scotland, Edgar offered a challenge "that they might shew by prooife whether of them ought to be subject to the other," but Kenneth, afraid of Edgar's military prowess, chose to beg forgiveness rather than to fight.46

Holinshed also tells how upon the death of Edgar and the beginning of the reign of Edward, his bastard son, "a blasing starre was seen, signifiant (as was thought) the miserable haps that followed."47 This may have been some slight impetus for Gloucester's "these late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us" (1.2.103-04).

This is not to say that King Lear is set in Saxon England, for trying to determine any consistent historical setting of King Lear is an impossible task. The legendary Lear lived, according to Holinshed, in the Jewish year of 3105, which is c. 656 B.C.; Shakespeare's Lear travels with a hundred knights. King Edgar began his reign in A.D. 959, while the setting of Arcadia, which supplies the outline of the Gloucester subplot, is that of a medieval romance. The religion of the characters is apparently Roman (1.1.160, 1.1.178, 2.4.21-22), but the military context is medieval: armies enter "with drum and colors"

46Holinshed, 1:690, 1:694, 1:698.

47Holinshed, 1:699.
(F: 5.2, 5.3), and there are alarums to indicate the offstage battle in 5.2, which, like the pre-artillery military sequences of King John, Troilus and Cressida, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra, would most probably involve cannon fire.48 Finally, Kent's fury over the ambitious Oswald, "that such a slave as this should wear a sword" (2.2.72), is as Elizabethan as Leonato's contempt of Claudio (Ado. 5.1) or Hamlet's of Osric.

If it is accepted that in Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare places a classical story in a late medieval milieu, it can also be argued that such a setting for King Lear, which like Troilus and Cressida, is ancient British history as the Elizabethans knew it, has the advantage of not rendering any episode or character of the play any more inconsistent or anachronistic than it would otherwise be, while at the same time having the effect of making the episodes involving Edgar, who has the second largest part in the play and appears, as does Lear, in ten of the play's twenty-six scenes, more integral. As Alvin B. Kernan observes, "in Lear and his court, Shakespeare characteristically conflates elements of British mythology, medieval feudalism, and Renaissance benevolent despotism to create a composite image of an older order."49

This perception of King Lear, which is contrary to that expressed by Pyle, who argues that the chivalric combat is "little in keeping

48See above, 249. See also Macbeth (1.2.OSD, 1.2.37), King John (2.1.210, 2.1.411-14). The alarums to indicate a sea battle in Antony and Cleopatra (3.10.OSD, 4.12.3.SD) would also, I believe, include cannon.

with the manners and atmosphere of the play,"^50 might also be justified
to some extent by drawing an analogy to *Henry IV*, where Shakespeare so
successfully combines two historical periods in the same play: the
Elizabethan world of Falstaff, and the fifteenth-century world of the
King, with the Prince of Wales moving at will from one to the other.
It is possible that this analogy to *Henry IV* can be extended, for just
as an important phase of the development of Hal's character is clearly
shown in his climactic combat with Hotspur at Shrewsbury, Edgar's
descent from heir-apparent of the Duke of Gloucester to hunted criminal
to naked, mad beggar, and his ascent from that state to champion of
England and restorer of the rule of law, is concluded with a swordfight
against an antagonist with whom he, like Hal, is compared, implicitly
and explicitly, throughout the play, as he gradually attains the
virtues and self-knowledge that go with kingship. For all the
differences between Hotspur and Edmund and Hal and Edgar, Harley
Granville-Barker's apt comment about the half-brothers in *King Lear*
could in most respects apply to the brothers-in-arms of *1 Henry IV*:

> Edmund flashes upon us in pinchbeck brilliance; the worth of Edgar
> waits discovery, and trial and misfortune must help to discover it—to himself above all.^51

Flahiff comments specifically upon the similarity of Edgar and Hal:

> Each is a consummate actor, each is misjudged by his father and
> proves himself with, in the eyes of some at least, unsuspected
> bravery and dignity by slaying an adversary who to a degree has
> usurped his place in his father's regard.^52

> Finally, although Flahiff does not allude to it, there is
> interesting evidence of the Elizabethans' knowledge of King Edgar and

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^50^Pyle, 453.

^51^Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, (London: B.H.

^52^Flahiff, "Edgar, Once and Future King," 226.
of the heroic light in which they placed him. In *The Perfect Arte of Navigation* (1577), royal astrologer John Dee praises Edgar as the exemplar of English strength through naval power whom the Queen should emulate:

This Grand Navy, of peaceable King Edgar, of so many Thousand Ships: And they furnished with a Hundred Thousand Men, (at the least): with all the Finall Intents of those Sea-forces, (so Invincible,) . . . The Godly and Imperiall Succes thereof: are, (in a manner,) Kingly lessons, and Prophetically Incouragements to us left.\(^5\)

What can be learned of the characters of Edgar and Edmund by their chivalric combat? To look at the appellant first, we must immediately remind ourselves that Edgar is not only seeking personal revenge for the wrongs done him, but fights as the restorer of the rule of law.\(^5\)

In the challenge he offers in Edmund's presence, although unwilling to reveal his identity, he claims the rights of knighthood and lists Edmund's crimes:

> Behold, it is my privilege,
> The privilege of mine honors,
> My oath, and my profession. I protest,
> Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence,
> Despite thy victor-sword and fire-new fortune,
> Thy valor, and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
> False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
> Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious Prince.

(5.3.129-136)

Edmund's response is one of defiance mixed with self-reassurance. In alluding to the "right" or "rule" of knighthood by which he could avoid the trial, he reminds himself that he is the Duke of Gloucester, by definition a powerful and respected figure, and no longer the Duke's


bastard son. The fact that he is challenged to a battle according to
the laws of chivalry is in itself a triumph for Edmund; although
Edgar's appearance is described as "fair and warlike" by Edmund
(5.3.143), the fact that Edgar would have had to borrow armor or strip
it from a body on the field could indicate that Edmund is being ironic,
but nevertheless welcomes this trial as a means of establishing his
authority as equal with Albany's, a rivalry alluded to in 5.3.45-61.
Edgar's armor, at best, would have to be without a covering gown or
other colorful insignia, and would therefore look drab compared with
that of the Duke of Gloucester. The idea that Edgar's appearance is
not totally "fair and warlike" is also consistent with Albany's comment
upon learning that the unknown knight is Edgar:

Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness.

(5.3.176-77)

Edgar's manner of walking would hardly be needed as a clue to his
nobility should he be wearing magnificent armor; therefore his armor
would have to be, as Cairncross notes, "plain."\(^{55}\)

As with the fencing match in *Hamlet*, there are slight differences
between the textual description of this swordfight as found in Q and in
F. Q shows:

BAST. ... This sword of mine shall give them instant way
Where they shall rest for ever, trumpets speake.

ALB. Save him, save him.

GON. This is meere practise Gloster by the law of armes
Thou art not bound to answere an unknown opposite,
Thou art not vanquisht, but cousned [sic] and beguild.

(5.3.150-54)

There is no stage direction for the start or finish of the fight. F,
however, shows:

This sword of mine shall give them instant way
Where they shall rest for ever, trumpets speake.


This is practise, Gloster,
By th'law of Warre, thou wast not bound to answer
An unknown opposite: thou art not vanquish'd,
But cozend and beguild.

F is the version accepted by modern editors of the conflated text.

Goneril's use of the past tense, "thou wast not bound," is more logical; it also locates the fight between Edmund's "trumpets speake" and Goneril's "this is practise." The stage direction on the same line as Albany's "save him, save him," however, is of no help in determining to whom Albany refers. If Albany speaks after Edmund is disabled, there is no one to save, as Edmund's doom is now inevitable—in battles of chivalry on a charge of treason, as Squibb notes, the defeated combatant, even if not actually killed by his opponent, was always executed, be he appellant or defendant.56

Dr. Johnson offers the opinion that Albany "desired that Edmund's life be spar'd at present, only to obtain his confession, and to convict him openly by his own letter,"57 but this view is somewhat confused. The letter is not necessary to prove Edmund's guilt; that guilt has already been proved legally by Edmund's defeat in trial by battle, and he has, to use Johnson's terms, been "convicted openly." If Albany wishes Edmund's execution to be delayed so that he might have the satisfaction of hearing a confession, he need appeal to no one but himself, as he is de facto king at this point; it would also require a strange reading of the line to turn it into an appeal to Edgar to

56Squibb, 23.

57Johnson, 8:702.
withhold from finishing off the wounded Edmund. Kenneth Muir notes that "in some productions the words are spoken of Edgar, when he is temporarily disarmed," but this is inconsistent with the legalities of the trial; as seen in Richard II, no one may interfere with a battle of chivalry once it has begun:

On pain of death, no person be so bold
Or daring-hardy as to touch the lists,
Except the Marshal and such officers
Appointed to direct these fair designs.

(1.3.42-45)

The Ordinance of Thomas of Woodstock expressly forbids calling out during the combat:

And than the conestable shall commaunde the marchall for to cry at the foure corners of the lystys in the maner that folowith, Oyez, oyez, oyez, we charge and commaunde by the kynges conestable and mershall, that noon of grete vertue and of litill value, of what condicion or nacione that he bee, be so hardy hens forewarde for to come nygh the listes by foure fote, nor to speke nor to crye nor to make contenaunce ne token, nor semblance nor noyse . . .

Further to this point is the example of a combat in the lists fought before the Duke of Burgundy in 1423, as recorded in the chronicles of Monstrelet:

Upon this, the usual proclamation was made by a herald, for all persons to clear the lists, and to give no hindrance to the champions on pain of death.

In the absence, then, of any clear reason why Albany would want Edmund (or Edgar) "saved," one is led to agree with Theobald that both Q and F are in error, and that the words are meant to be spoken by Goneril. It is dramatically logical for her, during the combat, emotionally to beseech her soldiers to step in at a moment when Edmund appears to be in danger. Should she call out, as is often done in modern

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58 Muir, ed., King Lear, 196.
60 Monstrelet, 2:498.
productions, after Edmund receives a disabling wound, then the appeal to her soldiers to step in at this point and rescue Edmund would, of course, be tantamount to an act of civil war. While this is not evidence, it might be noted that in the 1983 television production in which Laurence Olivier played Lear, Goneril's cry of "save him," while running toward the stricken Edmund, did not look or sound out of place.

Although readers of King Lear need not concern themselves unduly with the weapons Edgar and Edmund use, to those involved in performance this matter presents an interesting problem. The Ordinance is specific regarding the weapons for battles of chivalry: "longe swerde, shorte swerde and dagger,"61 and accounts of analogous combats in Froissart or Monstrelet, when weapons are mentioned, refer only to swords.

It is most likely that the combatant was able to choose for himself the type of sword (long or short) he wished to use. The dagger would be effective in close-quarters fighting for inflicting wounds in areas of the body not covered by plate, or by penetration between the layers of the plate; it is also possible that the dagger was used defensively as in more modern rapier and dagger. Sir William Segar's Booke of Honor and Armes contains a picture of two fully armored men fighting in the lists with sword and dagger, just above a description of the trial by combat between Edmond Ironside and Canute:

Edmond, of the race of West Saxons, fought in combat with with Canutus King of Denmarke, for the possession of the Crowne of England. In which fight, both the Princes being weare, by consent departed the land betwixt them.62.


62Sir William Segar, The Booke of Honor and Armes, 1590 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, Early English Books 1475-1640, reel 396), 86. This same illustration appears several times in Segar, and is not specific to the Edmond-Canute combat. See also above, 60.
Another, quite different interpretation of "long swerde, short swerde, and dagger" is possible, which is that the marshall would separate the combatants after a certain period with one weapon, at which point they would discard it and continue with another. Froissart tells of a trial in 1385 between John le Carogne and James le Gris which has the combatants first running one course with lances, and then dismounting and finishing the combat with swords—le Carogne "bette downe his adversary to the erthe, and threst his swerde in his body and soo slew him in the felde." None of these options, however, precludes the use of a shield, for it was considered to be not a weapon, but part of one's armor. As Squibb notes, the equipment for defense was the prerogative of each individual.63

Given the historical indications, it seems probable that the original Edmund and Edgar fought with sword and target, giving the swordfight the medieval visual imagery which the Elizabethans associated with their heroic past, an imagery best evoked by the sword and target combat as so frequently described in The Faerie Queene. The exact manner in which Edgar and Edmund fought cannot really be determined, but some general ideas might be worth proposing. Paul N. Siegel observes:

... in Edgar's combat with Edmund there is a reversal of roles which is at the end redressed. It is Edgar who says "my name is lost" (5.3.121); Edmund, the bastard, has name, place, and eminence. Edmund is at the height of his fortune, a victorious leader who had shared the command of the British army, contended for by two queens and speaking with proud assurance to the king of one half of Britain. In a moment he loses everything ... when the blast of Edgar's trumpet, tensely waited for and late in coming, sounds out in answer to the third and final blast of his own, it is as the trumpet announcing the last judgement.64

63Froissart, Thirde and Fourthe Boke fo. lxxix r.; Squibb, 220.

64Siegel, Shakespearean Tragedy and Elizabethan Compromise, 168.
Sensitive direction of the actual combat could show it to be a continuation of this process of reversal which Siegel describes. It has been noted previously that Edmund could be seen to be somewhat overconfident as the fight commences, and the opening moves should show that he sees it as an excellent opportunity rather than as a serious threat. When Edgar proves to be a formidable opponent, however, the staging could show Edmund gradually losing that confidence and becoming increasingly desperate. The outcome should remain in doubt for some time; given that Shakespeare has already deceived his audience's expectation by having Cordelia's army, contrary to the chronicles and to the Chronicle Historie of King Lear, lose the battle, this single combat would be genuinely suspenseful to those who did not have, unlike us when we attend a production of Lear, prior knowledge of the play's ending.65

At the beginning of the play Edgar was easily deceived by Edmund; in a sense he did not know who his half-brother really was. Now, in this chivalric swordfight, one sees that Edmund is the deceived, engaged in mortal combat with an opponent whose identity is unknown to him, and, contrary to his own expectations, will defeat him. When enacted in this light, the trial by battle is not only an integral element in the maturation of an English king, but also gives added meaning to Edmund's dying words: "the wheel has come full circle."

65An interesting discussion of how some of the important episodes of King Lear would have been contrary to the expectations of Shakespeare's audience is to be found in Derek Peat, "'And That's True Too': King Lear and the Tension of Uncertainty," in Aspects of King Lear: Articles Reprinted from Shakespeare Survey, ed. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 43-53.
Appendix to Chapter XII: Joan v. the Dauphin (1H6.1.2)

After Joan, not fooled by Reignier's impersonation of the Dauphin, recognizes him at their first meeting in 1 Henry VI (1.2.64-70), and then, in private conversation, informs him of the reason for her arrival in the French camp (1.2.72-92), the Dauphin, "astonished" by her "high terms" (1.2.93), challenges her to single combat:

Only this proof I'll of thy valor make.  
In single combat thou shalt buckle with me,  
And if thou vanquishest, thy words are true;  
Otherwise I renounce all confidence.  

(1.2.94-97)

This combat is difficult to classify; it was not included in the discussion of military swordplay in 1 Henry VI, as its circumstances are entirely different from such combats as Joan v. Talbot or Talbot rescuing his son from the French soldiers. Nor is it brawl or a trial by battle, obviously, and the ceremonial of a tourney, with set rules of play and judges to administer them, as we see in Troilus and Cressida, is also missing.

Consideration of this fight is undertaken as an appendix to the chapter on "formal combats" as there is at least a clear challenge to a test of skill and courage.

I have found no mention of this episode in any critical commentary on 1 Henry VI. As noted above,66 Dessen discusses Joan's battlefield encounter with Talbot at some length, but ignores this earlier combat. As it is the first time the audience sees Joan fight, however, it is of importance to the modern director, for her "credentials" as a swordsman need to be convincingly established—something particularly difficult today when Joan is normally played by a young woman, although

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66See above, 123-26.
not necessarily, as Dessen says, "a mere slip of a girl."67

For this combat, Charles could use either sword and target or single bastard-sword. Although the point is not explicit, it is fair to assume that Joan is already wearing armor, as the challenge to combat would be preposterous otherwise. One assumes Joan attained her armor as she did her sword, by taking it from the monument of a deceased knight:

I am prepar'd. Here is my keen-edg'd sword,
Decked with five flower-de-luces on each side,
The which at Touraine, in Saint Katharine's churchyard,
Out of a great deal of old iron I chose forth.

(1.2.98-101)

The practicalities of this very difficult sequence would best be served, in Shakespeare's time and our own, by Joan's fighting with two-handed use of a bastard-sword. This would enable her victory over the Dauphin to be staged convincingly, and one need not resort to an obvious use of witchcraft, or to show the Dauphin to be a weak fighter, which is not, pace Bernard Shaw, in his character.68 To have Joan somehow "outfence" Charles with sword and target would appear more contrived than having Joan, in accordance with the standard practice of foot combats,69 "win" by beating Charles to the ground with strong two-handed blows to his armor:

Stay, stay thy hands! Thou art an Amazon.
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.

(1.2.104-05—my emphasis)

Clearly, then, this is a combat which would lose much in presentation by the all-too-common theatrical use of the single sword

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68See above, 119.

69See above, 314.
as a defensive weapon. A more subtle employment of Joan's supernatural power would be to give her extra strength; the Dauphin's reaction to Joan's "powerful" blows to his body are relatively easy for a skilled actor to simulate convincingly. Of paramount importance, then, is the actors' armor; only stage armor fashioned of real metal is completely suitable for such combats. It has been noted above that the Elizabethan actor would most likely have worn real metal armor under a gown; when Wallace Chappel insisted upon metal armor for his 1981 production of Richard III at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Missouri, his costume department's ingenious use of aluminum showed that its construction for modern productions does not present an insurmountable problem.

70As noted above, 71.

CHAPTER XIII

BRAWLS AND SUDDEN FIGHTS

Were we concerned with swordfighting in all the plays of Shakespeare rather than only the chronicles, the subject of brawls, or sudden, informal fights would receive greater prominence, as a good deal of analysis would have to be given to the fighting in *Romeo and Juliet*. This discussion, however, is limited to two incidents: the brawl between the men of Winchester and Gloucester at the gates of the Tower of London in *1 Henry VI* (1.3) and Edgar's altercation with Oswald at Dover in *King Lear* (4.6).

1 *Henry VI*

Shakespeare splits the *1 Henry VI* brawl, and here the term "brawl" is appropriate, over two scenes. In 1.3, Gloucester's "blue-coats"

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1I have decided not to include the confrontation between Kent and Oswald in 2.2 of *King Lear*. Although swords might be drawn, the disputants are separated before the fight has a chance to begin in earnest. See above, 275-76.
tangle with Winchester's "tawny" (1.3.47), the mêlée being interrupted by the arrival of the mayor, who is momentarily able to stop the fighting before tempers again flare and, according to F, "here they skirmish again" (1.3.70.SD). This, in turn, causes the Mayor to have it proclaimed that any further fighting in the streets will be treated as a capital offense:

... we charge and command you, in His Highness' name, to repair to your several dwelling-places, and not to wear, handle, or use any sword, weapon, or dagger henceforward, upon pain of death.

(1.3.75-79)

When Winchester and Gloucester meet in Parliament to debate their grievances in 3.1, there is another skirmish amongst the servingmen, but since they have been forbidden to use "any sword, weapon, or dagger," they pelt each other with stones (3.1.74-85).

Bullough cites two passages from Fabyan as the source of these incidents, but inexplicably relates both to 3.1, although one is

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2Joseph Strutt notes that blue was the standard servant's livery in Elizabethan times, "and probably long before that period;" Petruchio's servants need to have their "blue coats brushed" (Shr. 4.1.93-94), as observed by Percy Macquoid in Shakespeare's England. The association of tawny with the church is an interesting one; OED's definition of "tawny-coat" is "an ecclesiastical apparitor [summoner] by the colour of his livery," a definition opposite, as OED notes, to the Clown's comment in Thomas Heywood's A Maidenhead Well Lost (1633): "though I was never a Tawny-coate, I have playd the summoners part." Percy Macquoid notes that Wolsey's pillar-bearers wore the tawny, but cites no source for this information; it may be a passage in Cavendish's Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey: "And all his yomen wt noble men & gentilmens servauntes folowyng hym in ffrencche tawny lyyere Coottes." In A Display of Heraldrie (1611), John Guillim writes that tawny "is a colour of worship." Joseph Strutt, A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England, 2 vols. (London: 1842; reprint, London: Tabard Press, 1970), 2:191; Percy Macquoid, "Costume," Shakespeare's England 2:112-13; Thomas Heywood, A Pleasant Comedy Called a Mayden-head Well Lost (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, Early English Books, 1475-1640, Reel 890), Act 2; George Cavendish, The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (London: Early English Text Society, Oxford University Press, 1959), 44; John Guillim, A Display of Heraldrie, 1611, facs. rpt., The English Experience, vol. 934 (Amsterdam: Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1979), 11.
clearly related to 1.3:

... the maire ... was by the lord protectour sent for in spedy maner. And when he was comen to his presence, he gave him streyght commaundemente, that he shuld se that the city wer surely watched in night folowyng, and so it was. Then upon the morowe folowinge about ix of the clocke, certayne servauntes of the forenamed bishop would have entred by the bridge gate. But the rulers thereof would not suffer them in so greate number, but kept them out by force, lyke as before they were commaunded. Wherewith they beyng greviously discontented, gathered to them a more number of archers and men of armes, and assaulted the gate with shotte and other means of warre. In so much that the Commons of the citee hearyng thereof, shutte in their Shoppes and sped them thither in great nomber. And likely to have ensued greate effusion of bloude shortly thereupon, ne had been the discrecion of the Maire and his brethren, that exHORTed the people by al politike meane to kepe the kinges peace.

As he does with the military sequences in France, Shakespeare changes the exact nature of events from the reign of Henry VI, as seen in his sources, to suit his thematic purpose. Fabyan's quarrel is between the Mayor's men within the gates, albeit under Gloucester's orders, and Winchester's, who are without. Shakespeare makes Winchester's men the occupants of the tower and Gloucester's the assailants, while the Mayor heads a third party trying to keep the peace. Furthermore, contrary to Fabyan, the Bishop and the Protector are brought into the scene. Finally, and most relevantly to our purposes, Shakespeare makes it a swordfight instead of using Fabyan's "archers and men at armes" with their "shotte and other means of warre," the indications of swordfighting being Gloucester's direction to "draw, men, for all this privileged place" (1.3.46), and the mayoral officer's subsequent explicit mention of swords and daggers as forbidden weapons (1.3.78).

The place of this swordfight in the thematic development of Henry VI may be observed by comparing it to the events of the previous and following scenes. The first scene of act one shows civil

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3Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources 3:48.
dissension as seen at Henry V's funeral; 1.2 shows the arrival of Joan to the French command, which is the beginning of the military disasters for the English depicted in the play, while 1.4 shows the death of Salisbury at Orleans. As it has been generally accepted that Shakespeare relates civil dissension to the loss of English holdings in France and the death of Talbot, this episode, in which there is a direct confrontation between Winchester and Gloucester, followed by a brawl in which deadly weapons are used although casualties evidently do not eventuate, might then be regarded first as a commentary upon 1.2, adding more civil dissension to the foreign threat represented by Joan, and second as a prologue to the sad business of 1.4.

How would this fight have been staged in 1590? Although the (probably authorial) stage directions of F are extensive, there are still confusing problems to work out. The first stage direction in F concerning some violent action shows "Glosters men rush at the Tower Gates, and Woodvile the Lieutenant speakes within" (1.3.14.SD).

In his 1956 book, Shakespeare's Globe Playhouse, and in a separate essay published the same year, Irwin Smith proposes that for this scene property gates would be used in the wide entrance of the discovery space, and that the blue-coats would direct their assault at them. While Smith is careful to remind his readers that his assertion is not categorical, it is at least reasonable, and the course of the action implies that such gates, if used, would remain closed throughout the sequence; the next stage direction would most likely call for Winchester and his men to enter from one of the side doors and confront Gloucester's party outside the Tower: "Enter to the protector at the

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4See above, 137-39.
Tower Gates, Winchester and his men in Tawney Coates" (1.3.28.SD).5 The actual fighting, then, would take over much of the main stage. Although there is no stage direction to indicate it, the fighting amongst the servants would most probably start immediately upon the command to draw swords at 1.3.46. This fighting would then go on all around the Bishop and the Protector as they engage in a furious shouting match (1.3.47-56), with, clearly shown in Shakespeare's next stage direction, the blue-coats driving the tawny-coats away from the gates before they are interrupted by the Mayor. F reads: "Here Glosters men beat out the Cardinalls men, and enter in the hurly-burly the Maior of London, and his Officers" (1.3.56.SD).

OED defines "hurley-burley" as "commotion, tumult, strife, uproar, confusion," and some of that commotion is, in this scene, undeniably comic; Gloucester loses his temper as he stamps on Winchester's hat and then calls him "Winchester goose" (1.3.53), and the Mayor has a humorous couplet to close the scene:

Good God, these nobles should such stomachs bear!  
I myself fight not one in forty year.  

(1.3.90-91)

The fighting itself, however, would not be farcical. A better known Shakespearean use of "hurley-burley" is in Macbeth:

When the hurly-burley's done  
When the battle's lost and won.  

(1.1.3-4)

In the New Arden Macbeth, Kenneth Muir, citing Hall, notes that hurley-burley refers "especially to the tumult of sedition or insurrection," and Hall's use of the term, which is in connection with some serious

insurrections of 1536–37, is supportive of Muir’s inference.⁶ As Shakespeare’s use of "hurley-burley" in Macbeth is, like Hall’s, closely related to a civil war, there is good cause to see the "civil brawl" (Rom. 1.1.89) of 1 Henry VI as not only a scene of wild confusion, but also as an encounter which seriously reflects the implications of the irreconcilable divisions in the English nobility, leading to the civil wars which will inevitably follow. This serious side of the fighting would be emphasized by swordsmanship which appears to be carried out in earnest.

Would the blue-coats and tawny-coats fight with single sword, single rapier, rapier and dagger, or sword and buckler? Although bucklers are not mentioned in the stage directions, there are some historical indications that the liveried servants of the nobility or the church might carry them. If the tawny-coats are indeed summoners, then to carry a buckler would not necessarily be inappropriate—Chaucer’s summoner carries one, although his is made of "cake."⁷ As for the blue-coats, there is the passage from Edmund Howes’ continuation of Stow’s Annales referred to above in discussion of the bucklers carried by Samson and Balthasar in Romeo and Juliet:

When every Servingman, from the base to the best, carried a Buckler at his backe, which hung by a hilt or pommell of his Sword which hung before him.⁸

Before deciding, however, that the blue-coats or tawny-coats would be carrying bucklers here, it must be remembered, as indicated with reference to Romeo and Juliet, that Howes describes a typical Sunday

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⁷See above, 84.

⁸Howes, 1024.
The use of single sword or rapier, instead of sword and buckler, would also be appropriate for this scene, particularly for the tawny-coats, as there is an illustration in the MS of Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* which shows the Cardinal's entourage riding in procession to Westminster, some of the men preceding Wolsey wearing coats of orange-brown, which OED lists as a common shade of "tawny," are wearing rapiers.10

As there is so little firm evidence to guide us, then, no conclusion can be drawn as to the exact weaponry used in this brawl; the modern director may choose single sword or rapier, rapier and dagger, or sword and buckler, or any combination thereof, without fear of staging a fight that would be deemed inappropriate on the Elizabethan stage.

**King Lear**

The only other swordfight in the chronicle plays falling into our present category is the one between Edgar and Oswald in *King Lear*. While it is not as crucial or elaborately drawn as the trial by combat, it is nevertheless an incident which provides an insight into both characters.11

In 4.6, Edgar drops the character of Poor Tom, leaving him at the top of the imaginary cliff from which Gloucester believes himself to

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9 See above, 86.

10 George Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, Douce MS 363, Bodleian Library, Oxford, fo. 52 v. Too much should not be made of the illustration, as Wolsey's gown, which one would expect to be red, is the same orangey color.

11 In one respect this is not a swordfight, as Edgar, it will be shown, uses a sort of short-staff. Oswald, however, would have a sword or rapier.
have jumped, and, when Oswald approaches them, assumes the guise of a rustic. In taking on this new identity, Edgar informs us of the weapon he will use to defend himself. Modern editions accept F: "May, come come not near th'old man, keep out, che vor ye, or I'se try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder" (4.6.239-42). As noted in Kenneth Muir's New Arden edition, the uncorrected Q1 shows battero for ballow, while other quartos show bat.12

In a 1969 essay devoted exclusively to this combat, A.L. Soens discusses the meanings of battero, bat, and ballow in detail, and although his general observations about the fight are, it will be seen, correct, his specific conclusions regarding Edgar's weapon may be challenged. He notes that F's ballow is "a dialect word for staff or pole . . . and that battero and bat derive from batoon, baton, and baston . . . [they] are synonymous with waster and cudgel in fencing contexts."13

Soens offers several contemporary references to show that the waster or cudgel he proposes for Edgar is simply a wooden training sword occasionally used by novice fencers:

The wooden training substitute for this sword, the cudgel, was neither a quarterstaff nor a mace. The cudgel was capable of the rapid and sophisticated cutting play of the backsword. It was about an ell (1.25 yards) long, made of ash or some other pliant or tough wood . . . it probably tapered from butt to tip.14

Soens' opinion of the length of the weapon is drawn from accounts of the Paramour case, but it has been shown that the weaponry for such legal procedures was strictly specified, and the suggestion that it be

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12Muir, ed. King Lear, 173.


14Soens, 152.

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used for a sudden fight out on the countryside represents an unjustified inference. Furthermore, such batons were used in conjunction with a leather-covered shield, and it seems ludicrous to suggest that Edgar, as Poor Tom, would be wandering about the countryside so armed.

Even disregarding his opinion of the weapon's length, Soens' suggestion of the manner in which Edgar is to use it, literally as a substitute sword, held in one hand, is also inappropriate, for without an accompanying buckler or target it would not suggest the traditional English style of training in defence to the knowledgeable Elizabethans.

While the dictionaries of the period do give cudgel as a definition for bat, they also give staff, which argues for the nonspecificity to fencing of the term as Shakespeare uses it. Indeed, the dramatic situation calls for Edgar to make use of any convenient object which might come to hand—perhaps a tree-branch that he or Gloucester has been using as a walking-stick. Such a branch could then serve as a staff, a formidable weapon according to Silver. A portion of the seven pages he devotes to the uses of this weapon reads:

The short staffe or halfe Pike, Forrest-bill, Partisan, or Gleve, or such like weapons of perfect length, have the vantage against the Battel-Axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-Bill, the two hand sword, the Sword and Target, and are too hard for two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers and Poniards with Gantlets, and for the long staffe and Morris Pike.

15 Neilson, 159; Cripps-Day, 73.

16 Cited Soens, 149.

17 Swetnam gives voluminous instruction in the use of the of the staff, 134-48; see also above, 19.

18 Oswald's use of the rapier is indicated by Edgar's line "Come, no matter vor your foins" (4.6.249). As noted previously, the rapier was a foining (thrusting) weapon, while the standard sword was used more as a cutting weapon. Silver, Paradoxes, 31; see above, 56.
Silver's treatise was written as a condemnation of the fashionable Italian style of fencing and a defense of the traditional English methods; by employing this simple weapon against Oswald's rapier, Edgar, as Soens observes, becomes a "popular champion... pitting his English techniques against the aristocratic rapier and the Italian technique of Oswald."19

This view of Edgar as a "popular champion" of traditional English styles of combat is consistent with the perception of him given above as his being, literally, the "champion" of English justice. What of his opponent? Edgar describes Oswald as

... a serviceable villain,
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

(4.6.252-54)

His confrontation with Kent, and Kent's disgust that "such a slave as this should wear a sword" (2.2.72), has been remarked upon previously; Kent's sword is indeed drawn in this scene, but Oswald's probably remains in its scabbard until Edmund puts a stop to the altercation (2.2.43).20

Leo Kirschbaum writes of the strong thematic connection between Oswald and Edgar:

Beribboned, graceful, sophisticated and cocksure, Oswald breeds a special kind of fear in the spectator. If the faithful servitors—the Fool, Kent, and Cornwall's servant—belong to the old world of faith, love, morality, and decency, Oswald belongs body and soul to the new world of opportunity, selfishness, immorality and cruelty.

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19Soens, 150.

20Kent's dislike of Oswald is engendered in 2.1 when Oswald willfully insults Lear by addressing him as "my lady's father" (1.4.87), which would, as Colie notes, "be as severe a shock to the audience [of 1606] as to the defenceless and unprepared Lear." Colie, "Reason and Need," 202.
Even more than Edmund (the complete opportunist), Oswald shows the nastiness of the new way of things.\textsuperscript{21}

As Thomas Marc Parrott observes, the narrative of King Lear does not require Edgar's country-bumpkin disguise; he assumes it only for Oswald's benefit. One is then led to conclude that Shakespeare's intention in using the rustic dialect is to make the very "English" quality of Edgar stand out against the unpleasant Oswald:

There was no reason for Edgar to play the peasant, but Shakespeare's audience must have been amused and pleased to see a country fellow armed only with a cudgel, Edgar's "ballow," knock down and kill the overweening retainer of a great lord, a type heartily disliked by London citizens.\textsuperscript{22}

Parrott goes on to note that Poor Tom's answer to Lear's "what hast thou been" (3.4.84) reflects upon Oswald, for Tom's reply, "a servingman, proud in heart and mind . . ." (3.4.85-100), may be understood as a description of the immoral opportunism Oswald displays.\textsuperscript{23}

If it is accepted that Edgar fights with an improvised staff, the technique to be employed by the actor is clearly described by Silver:

And here it is to be noted, that if he fight well, the staffe man never striketh but at the head, and thrusteth presently under at the body; and if a blow be first made, a thrust foloweth: & if a thrust be first made, a blow foloweth, and in doing any of them, the one breedeth the other; so that howsoever any of the sixe weapons shall carie his ward strongly to defend the first, he shall be too farre in space to defend the second, whether it be blow or thrust.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Kirschbaum, "Banquo and Edgar," 14.

\textsuperscript{22}Parrott, 300. Phyllis Rackin offers similar comments on the irony of Oswald being killed by the "peasant" Edgar. Phyllis Rackin, Shakespeare's Tragedies (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978), 99-100.

\textsuperscript{23}Parrott, 300.

\textsuperscript{24}Silver, Paradoxes, 38. The six weapons are sword and buckler, sword and target, two-hand sword, single sword, sword and dagger, rapier and dagger.
How does Edgar deliver the death-blow to this "serviceable villain?" Such stage business is more difficult on the Elizabethan stage, where "masking" the simulated blow from the entire audience is virtually impossible. In the age of the great actor-managers, who acted, of course, behind a proscenium-arch, it was popular for Edgar to disarm Oswald and then stab him with his own weapon.25 What works well on the modern thrust stage, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, might be assumed to have been manageable on the stage of the Globe, is for Edgar to "stun" Oswald with a blow to the head, as Silver recommends. Once Oswald is on the ground, his own dagger could be used to dispatch him. While it would be theatrically effective for Edgar to use his staff to strangle Oswald or break his neck, either action possible to simulate, Oswald's short speech in extremis (4.6.246-51), in which he reveals his possession of the letters intended for Edmund, is more consistent with a fatal stab wound.

25 Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors, 295.
CONCLUSION

Edgar's defeat of Oswald brings us to the end of this study of one element of Elizabethan stagecraft and the innovative manner in which Shakespeare made use of it. My intent has been to show that Shakespeare intended the swordfighting sequences in his chronicle plays to be an integral part of them as poetic works, and that this intention was achieved by his bringing together of several previously separate elements.

The first of these elements was, as I have argued, the already-existent tradition of combat sport in the playhouses, and the Elizabethans' enthusiasm for it, which would have in turn encouraged the actors to employ all the expertise they could muster in order to make the simulated swordfights of the plays as spectacular as the professionally-fought prizes would have been.

Second, there was, at least at the start of Shakespeare's career as a dramatist, the excitement of something new--no playwright before him had used the swordfight so often, or in such a variety of ways.

The third element was the Cult of Elizabeth, the neo-medieval orientation of so much of Elizabethan art and society, which provided a fertile field on which a dramatic convention which exploited this artistic and social phenomenon could grow.

I have also argued that Shakespeare's artistry in bringing these visual elements together with his command of dramatic verse was largely
responsible for the success of Henry VI, which in turn encouraged him to develop further the theatrical and dramatic form of the swordfight in his later work within the same genre. In every swordfight of every chronicle play there was the opportunity for Shakespeare's company, as there is the opportunity today, to enhance the audience's appreciation and understanding of the characters and theme of the play.

I believe it is significant that the plays receiving the lengthiest consideration here—Henry VI and Troilus and Cressida—are performed relatively rarely. Indeed, one of the reasons for the paucity of performances of these plays could be the frightening aspect stage swordfighting still holds for many practitioners in today's theatre, or the still-held view, particularly in the case of Henry VI, that the number of swordsmanship displays required by the text is somehow indicative of inferior dramatic craftsmanship. If there is any encouragement in these pages for but one more production of any of the plays considered, with due attention paid to the presentation of stage combat and its importance in elucidating the theme of the play in question, then my, and the reader's efforts will have accomplished a great deal.
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